

Tick Removal Guide

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Here is a guide of how to remove ticks:

1. Grasp the tick with fine-tipped forceps/tweezers as close to the skin surface as possible. Why: Disease-causing agents are carried either in salivary glands or in the gut which are located in the idiosoma (see Figure 1). Pressure on the idiosoma tends to squeeze the disease-causing organisms into the skin lesion. Noxious methods (e.g., burning, suffocating, irritating the tick) risks regurgitation of disease-causing organisms into the skin wound.
2. Pull directly upward with slow, steady pressure (Figure 2). Why: Feeding ticks cement their mouthparts into the skin. A slow steady pull upward minimizes the chances of leaving the mouthparts in the skin. Sudden jerking motions or twisting motions tend to tear the mouthparts off the idiosoma.
3. Wash/clean the bite area with alcohol swabs, iodine swabs, or soap and water. Why: This will tend to kill or remove organisms that may have leaked out of the tick during its removal. If the mouthparts remain in the skin, don't panic – your body is able to take care of it - like it does a splinter.

Figure 1. Main parts of tick and location of the salivary glands and gut in the tick.

Figure 2. Placement of tweezers and direction of pull.

