

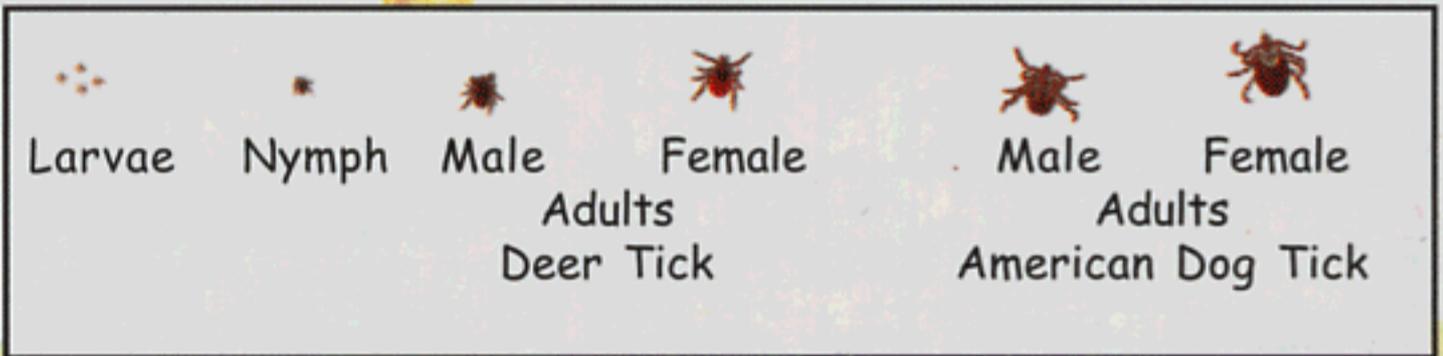
# DEER TICKS AND LYME DISEASE



 The deer tick (also known as the blacklegged tick), is present throughout Massachusetts and may be infected with several human diseases, including Lyme disease (LD) which is common in New England.

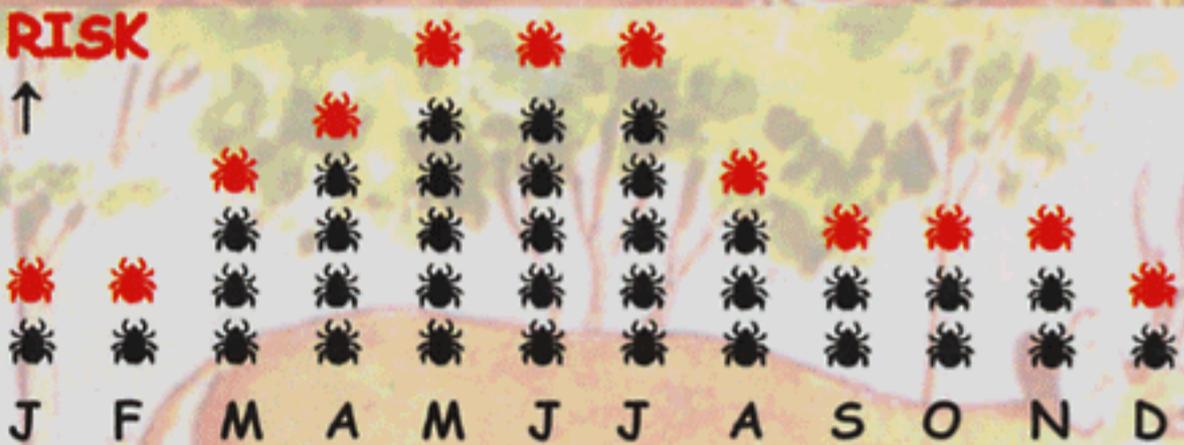
## TWO PRINCIPAL TICKS OF MASSACHUSETTS

 Two tick species common in the state are the deer tick and the American dog tick, both pictured below as actual sizes for comparison. Note that only the deer tick transmits Lyme disease; the American dog tick has not been implicated as an LD vector, but may transmit other diseases such as tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.



 The deer tick has a two-year life cycle that includes three feeding stages known as the larva, nymph and adult. Generally, larvae and nymphs feed on a small mammal, like a field mouse, while adult ticks feed on larger mammals, including white-tailed deer. The risk period for humans (see below) is **highest** during the **nymph** stage from **May-July**, as these tiny ticks may be infective, are difficult to see and are present when people are active outdoors. Adult ticks may also be infective and are active from fall through spring. Thus, there is risk of a tick bite throughout the year.

### RISK



 The typical deer tick habitat is **near the ground** within a wooded tract such as a conservation or recreational area. Ticks may also be encountered in backyards or along bicycle trails. Pets should be checked on a regular basis, as ticks can hitchhike and thus be moved considerable distances. Contact your veterinarian for more information about pet protection.

## PREVENTION BEGINS WITH YOU

 If you hike, work or walk outdoors, especially during the high-risk period, wear **light colored clothing**, tuck your cuffs into socks and **inspect** your legs every hour. Use products labeled to repel or kill ticks. One ingredient is known as **DEET**, (use a concentration between 30-35% for adults and 10-15% for children). Other products contain PERMETHRIN and are applied to clothing, then permitted to dry before wearing. **Never** use these products on infants; use with caution on children, and never apply it on the child's face. Following the outdoor activity, **inspect** your body carefully for ticks, and put worn clothing into a **hot dryer** for ten minutes.

## TICK REMOVAL

 Ticks must be attached for **at least 24 hours** before they transmit LD; therefore, it is critical to **remove a tick immediately and properly**. Do not use petroleum jelly, gasoline, nail polish remover, etc., to dislodge the tick. Instead, extract promptly by grasping it near the head with fine tipped tweezers. Pull straight out with steady pressure. Avoid twisting; when the tick is out, apply an antiseptic to the site. **Circle the calendar date** when the tick was removed and **save the tick for identification**.

## LYME DISEASE

 The bite of the deer tick to a human may transmit Lyme disease, but not all deer ticks carry it. For about 60% of patients, the early stage of LD begins with an increasing, circular red rash.

Other symptoms of early LD may include:

- headache
- fatigue
- muscle pain
- chills
- fever
- joint pain

If untreated, the disease can spread throughout the body. **Chronic LD can be very debilitating**. If you suspect a tick bite or have symptoms, see your physician. Note the deer tick may also transmit other infections such as **babesia** and/or **ehrlichia**. All three of these diseases are reportable in Massachusetts. Further information on all tick topics may be obtained from:

MA Dept of Public Health (617.983.6800)

## WEB SITES

- [www.aldf.com](http://www.aldf.com) (American Lyme Disease)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (Centers for Disease Control)
- [www.acponline.org/lyme](http://www.acponline.org/lyme) (Physicians LD Site)
- [www.tickinfo.com](http://www.tickinfo.com) (Tick Products)
- [www.state.ma.us/dph](http://www.state.ma.us/dph) (MA Dept of Public Health)

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