

## Tick-Borne Disease and Tick Safety in San Mateo County

Public Health Education and Outreach Officer Megan Sebay from San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

I'd like to take a moment to remind you about the risk of tick-borne disease in San Mateo County and recommend a few precautions to reduce your risk. While there is NOT an elevated level or risk of tick-borne disease in San Mateo County compared to previous years, tick-borne diseases ARE present here and they can be very serious.

Ticks are present year-round, but are most abundant between the months of December and May. Results from the District's 2015/2016 tick-borne disease surveillance program indicate that up to 3% of ticks collected in San Mateo County are infected with bacteria capable of causing illness in humans. This is consistent with previous years' data for San Mateo County.

We recommend the following precautions when engaging in outdoor activities during tick season:

- When outdoors in areas where there may be ticks, wear long pants and sleeves. Don't wear shorts, sleeveless shirts, or sandals. Tuck pants into socks or boots, and shirts into pants. Light-colored clothing makes it easier to see ticks before they attach to the skin.
- Use tick repellent containing DEET. Tick repellents should be applied according to the label instructions only. Tick-repellent clothing is also available. Children should not apply concentrations of DEET higher than 10%.
- Ticks are often found in brush, tall grass, or leaf litter. When hiking, walk in the center of the trail. Avoid grassy or brushy areas, and don't hike off the trail.
- After outdoor activities in areas where there may be ticks, check yourself, your children, your pets, and your belongings carefully for ticks. Remember to check areas that cannot be easily seen, such as inside and around ears, on the scalp, and under arms. Showering soon after being outdoors can help rinse away unattached ticks, and will allow you to check all areas of your body.
- Prompt removal of attached ticks can reduce the chance of infection with a tick-borne disease. To remove a tick, use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin and pull gently but firmly. Do not jerk or twist the tick. Never crush, burn, or smother a tick. After removal, wash your hands and the bite area with soap and water.
- If you find a tick attached to your body, save it for testing. Place the tick in a plastic bag containing a wet paper towel. The District laboratory CANNOT test individual ticks – please contact your healthcare provider or the San Mateo County Public Health Laboratory (<http://www.smchealth.org/lyme-disease-ti...>).
- Consult a health professional if unable to completely remove a tick, or if a rash or fever develops after exposure to a tick.

For more information on ticks in San Mateo County, contact the San Mateo Mosquito and Vector Control District at (650) 344-8592 or visit [www.smcmvcd.org/ticks](http://www.smcmvcd.org/ticks).

Sincerely,

Megan Sebay  
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(650) 344-8592 | [www.smcmvcd.org](http://www.smcmvcd.org)

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