

TRCA Tick Response: Camps and Programs (Children)

Introduction

At TRCA, it's our experience that the sooner children become active and engaged in the outdoors, the stronger and more lasting their bond will be with the natural environment. Furthermore TRCA is strongly believes that spending time outdoors is an important way to maintain wellness as a whole.

Unfortunately, there are times of the year when going into nature anywhere in Southern Ontario means 'bug bites'. While most stinging or biting insects/arachnids aren't likely to cause anything worse than an "ouch" or itch, some individuals have a greater sensitivity which may mean a more severe reaction to a sting or bite.

In Southern Ontario, there are some species of critters that may carry diseases, such as West Nile Virus or Lyme Disease. While the risk of contracting these illnesses is low, it's important to be aware of the possibility. Blacklegged ticks (also known as deer ticks) are the type of ticks that carry Lyme disease. To learn more about ticks and Lyme disease, information is available on the [Public Health Ontario Website](#) as well as at your local [Public Health Unit](#).

TRCA's Approach to Dealing with Ticks at Camps and Programs:

What TRCA will do:

Before programming and camps start, TRCA staff conduct a general safety orientation with campers. As part of that orientation, staff will explain to participants how to identify ticks and to notify their leaders if they find one either on themselves or one of their fellow campers.

Upon completion of the program, campers will be asked to team up to do a simple visual scan of each other to help identify any ticks or other insects/arachnids that might have landed on participants.

If a tick is found biting a camp or program participant:

The following first aid approach will be followed by TRCA if a camper is found with a biting tick:

1. If the child is at a TRCA program with their school or with their guardian/parent, TRCA staff will follow the school's protocols for responding to the ticks, or check with the parent before responding to the tick. If no school protocol is available and no parents or guardians are available onsite, TRCA staff will remove the tick by following the steps outlined below.

2. If the child is at a TRCA program without their school or guardian/parent, TRCA will take the following steps to remove the tick:

- i. Grasp the tick with a set of tweezers as close to the skin as possible;
- ii. Slowly pull the tick straight out until it is removed;
- iii. Thoroughly cleanse the bite site with rubbing alcohol and/or soap and water after the tick has been removed;
- iv. Place the tick in a container and submit the tick for testing to the Public Health Unit; Follow up with parent/guardian and provide Case Number if possible.
- v. Notify the parent/guardian of the tick bite.

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3. TRCA recommends that if anyone is bitten by a tick that they consult their Public Health Unit or qualified health professional as soon as possible.

What you can do to help your child or student prepare:

- Consider sending your child to camp or program with insect repellent containing DEET or icaridin and show your child how to apply it according to the manufacturer's instruction. Please note that TRCA staff cannot provide insect repellent or apply it to your child.
- Send your child to camp with clothes that can cover exposed skin including long-sleeved shirts or jackets, long pants, and socks;
- When your child arrives home from spending time outdoors, help them search their body for ticks;
- Pay special attention to the following body areas (NOTE: TRCA staff can only help perform visual scans over participant's clothes):
 - Groin
 - Scalp
 - Underarm areas
 - Back
 - Ears
- Place your child's dry clothes (without other washed clothing) into the dryer set to "high" for 15 – 60 minutes
- Remove attached ticks from your child's body as soon as possible following your [Public Health Unit](#)'s recommendations.