

Removing ticks

1. Wear gloves to protect your fingers and use fine-tipped tweezers.
2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible and pull up with steady, even pressure. Don't jerk or twist the tick; this may cause the mouth parts or head to break off and remain in the skin.
3. Don't squeeze, crush or puncture a tick's body because its internal fluids also may cause infection.
4. After removing ticks, sterilize the bite area and thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water.
5. Save the tick in case you become ill. This added measure can help your health-care provider make an accurate diagnosis.



How can I prevent tick-borne illnesses?

- Wear light colored clothing to more easily identify ticks.
- Tuck pants into socks so that ticks can't crawl up inside pant legs.
- Apply an insect repellent with DEET to discourage ticks from attaching to the skin.
- Conduct a complete body check when returning from a potentially tick-infested area and immediately remove any ticks found.
- Parents should always check children and pets for ticks—especially their hair—after returning from brushy and heavily wooded areas.



Facts about Tick-Borne Illnesses



Prevent • Promote • Protect

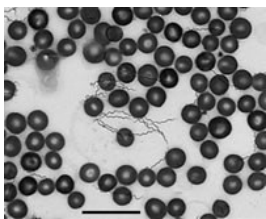
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El Paso County Public Health

“Protecting and Promoting Public Health and Environmental Quality in the Community through People, Prevention & Partnerships”

What is tick-borne relapsing fever (TBRF)?

Tick-borne relapsing fever is caused by spiral-shaped bacteria called *Borrelia*. This bacterium lives in rodents and insects—especially ticks and body lice—that can transfer the disease.



Borrelia bacteria that causes TBRF

How is it spread?

Rodents that carry the *Borrelia* bacteria are fed upon by soft ticks. Ticks may acquire the bacteria and then are able to pass it on to humans through their bites. TBRF is found in many parts of the world. In the United States, it most frequently occurs in Western, mountainous regions, such as El Paso County.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period (time from exposure to first symptoms) ranges from 2-18 days, but symptoms typically occur within seven days.

What are the symptoms of TBRF?

Relapsing fever is characterized by repeated fever outbreaks and often accompanied with other symptoms that can become more severe over time.

Initial symptoms may include:

- * Fever
- * Headache
- * General body aches
- * Chills and/or sweats

Later symptoms may include:

- * Nausea
- * Loss of appetite
- * Light sensitivity
- * Neck pain
- * Confusion
- * Vomiting
- * Dry cough
- * Rash
- * Eye pain
- * Dizziness

Is there a treatment for TBRF?

Yes. Antibiotics are effective against tick-borne relapsing fever. Consult with your physician about recommended medication.

What should I do if I find a tick in my skin or have symptoms of TBRF?

Contact your health-care provider if ...

- You are unable to fully remove a tick embedded in your skin.
- You or your child develops any of the previously listed symptoms.
- Symptoms do not improve or worsen after treatment, or new symptoms develop.

What is Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF)?

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is the most severe form of tick-borne illness in the United States. This disease is caused by *Rickettsia rickettsii*, a small bacterium that grows inside the cells of other living things and ultimately leads to infections.

RMSF was first recognized in 1896 in the Snake River Valley of Idaho and was originally called “black measles” because of its characteristic rash.

How is RMSF spread?

The organism that causes Rocky Mountain spotted fever is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick, similar to relapsing fever.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period for RMSF ranges from 5-10 days.

What are the symptoms of RMSF?

Three primary signs/symptoms to look for include fever, rash and tick bites. One or more of these signs may be evident when a person is first seen for medical care, but symptoms can increase over time.

Initial symptoms may include:

- * Fever
- * Muscle pain
- * Severe headache
- * Nausea/vomiting
- * Loss of appetite

Later symptoms may include:

- * Rash
- * Joint pain
- * Abdominal pain
- * Diarrhea

Is RMSF treatable?

The most important measure to prevent the spread of Rocky Mountain spotted fever is the careful removal of ticks from the skin. RMSF can lead to severe illness and even hospitalization if not properly and immediately addressed. Antibiotics typically are required to eliminate infection.