



Most of us have been bitten by a mosquito or an insect of some sort resulting in nothing but a mild annoyance. Scientists warn however, that a slew of insect transmitted diseases are on the rise across North America. This increase is fueled in part by high temperatures that are helping mosquitoes and ticks survive farther north and for longer periods of time. Increased global travel is also a contributing factor. In recent decades scientists also began seeing more urban transmission.

More than 500 species of wasps and 40 different types of ticks live in Canada. There are not yet vaccines approved to protect people from insect transmitted infections so proper support or medicines when people fall ill is crucial.

Some preventative measures are:

- o Walk on cleared trails whenever possible and avoid tall grassy areas.
- o Wear long, light colored clothing, avoiding floral prints. Choose shoes which are close toed and tuck pants into socks.
- o Avoid the outdoors at dawn or dusk if possible when insects are more prevalent.
- o Remove standing water which can be a breeding ground.
- o Use Health Canada approved insect repellent.
- o Check yourself and fellow hikers at the end of the trail for any sign of ticks.
- o Check pets for ticks around ears, eyelids, under collars between toes, around the tail, under front legs, between back legs.
- o Stay calm if you notice a bee or wasp as aggressive movements may lead to stings.

TREATMENT FOLLOWING A BITE OR STING

- § Wash the area with soap and water.
- § A paste of baking soda and water may be used to draw out venom.
- § Cool pack for 15 minutes at a time to numb the area.
- § A cream or spray with anti-histamine to isolate the swelling / itching.
- § Oral anti-histamine for more severe itching or swelling.
- § Avoid scratching the area due to bacteria under the fingernails which can lead to an infection.

Seek medical advice for signs of infection such as increased redness, hot to touch, pain, or pus. Also seek medical advice if you feel ill after 10 or more bites at the same time. More immediate attention is warranted for signs of significant swelling beyond the site of sting or swelling of the face, lips or tongue.

TREATMENT FOLLOWING A TICK BITE

Tick bites are not painful but noticeable. Ticks remain attached to the skin and attempt to crawl underneath. They can be found in the environment year round. Using a pair of tweezers grab tick as close as possible to the skin and gently pull straight out making sure to pull the entire insect. Do not jerk or twist and avoid crushing the body. Cleanse with alcohol and wash with soap and water. Tumbling dry clothing on high heat for 10 minutes kills any ticks possibly hiding. The risk of Lyme disease is lessened if the tick is removed within 24-48 hours.

Seek medical advice if you cannot completely remove the tick, if it is under the skin, if the bite becomes infected or if flu like symptoms or rash develop.

May we all remain vigilant and informed so that we may safely enjoy the beauty and marvel of nature in the majestic and wonderful great outdoors.

Submitted by Barbara Kearnes on behalf of the Wellness Ministry Team