

# How to avoid Lyme and other tick-borne diseases

*By Phyllis Mervine, President, California Lyme Disease Association*

## **REDUCE YOUR CHANCES OF A TICK BITE:**

- Avoid tick-infested areas, such as leaf litter under trees. Avoid brushing against long grasses and brush on edges of paths. Don't sit on fallen logs.
- Wear light-colored long pants and long sleeves so you can easily see any ticks.
- Tuck shirt into pants and tuck pants into socks.
- Use DEET on skin and treat clothing with spray containing permethrin.
- Do a thorough tick check upon returning inside and for several days following exposure. Check bedding for several days following exposure for ticks that drop off.
- Ticks, especially nymphal ticks, are tiny. Find and remove them before they bite.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN:**

- Use fine-point tweezers or a special tick-removing tool. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. If you don't have tweezers, protect your fingers with a tissue.
- Pull the tick straight out with steady, even pressure. Don't squeeze the tick's body.
- Place the tick in a small plastic bag or vial with blades of grass, leaf, or moist (not wet) piece of tissue.
- Label the bag with your name, date, site of bite and how long tick was attached.
- Have the tick identified and tested by a lab, health department or veterinarian.
- Wash your hands and disinfect the tweezers and bite site.
- Find out about tick-borne diseases and consult a doctor to see if you need treatment.

## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPHYLACTIC (PREVENTIVE) TREATMENT:**

- The tick infection rate in the area where you acquired the tick
- The relative risk of transmission, related to whether the tick was a nymph or adult, duration of attachment and how it was removed.
- Whether the tick tested positive for a tick-borne infection.
- The Lyme germs disseminate widely in the body within hours/days, including to the brain.
- The cost, risks, and benefits of prophylactic treatment vs. risk of infection.