

FIGHT THE BITE!

Playing Healthy Outdoors

The return of warmer temperatures usually offers the opportunity for relaxation and exploration outdoors. Whether you're relaxing in the backyard, turning up your garden, enjoying the pool or taking part in another outdoor activity, you'll want to be sure and keep your distance from disease-causing pests. Here is a reminder of some of the ways you and your family can remain healthy while outdoors this spring and summer.



Prevent Mosquito and Tick Bites

Warmer temperatures aren't just attractive to people, but to mosquitoes and ticks as well. Small as they are, these tiny creatures can cause severe illness, and in some cases, even death. There are several simple and effective ways to avoid their bite without missing out on your favorite outdoor activities.

Mosquitoes

One of the most recommended ways to avoid mosquitoes is to avoid going outdoors when they are most likely to bite - from dusk to dawn. Unfortunately, in Western North Carolina, we have some mosquitoes, such as the tree-hole mosquito, that tend to be out and bite all day.

To enjoy your outdoor activities at any time, repel mosquitoes by regularly using a [mosquito and tick repellent](#) that contains *DEET*, *picaridin*, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus.

- In addition to using mosquito repellent on exposed skin, wear long pants tucked into your socks and long sleeves to protect yourself from bites.
- Treat clothing with *permethrin* (which protects through several washings) or buy clothes that are pre-treated with *permethrin*.
- Always follow the directions on repellent packages carefully and use caution when treating small children.

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Ticks

Ticks are out all the time. Young ticks are so small that they can be difficult to see, but both young and adult ticks look to animals and sometimes people to bite.

Keep ticks at a distance by avoiding tick-infested areas, especially places with leaf-litter, brush, and high grasses.

- Use a mosquito and tick repellent containing 20% *DEET*.
- Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors and check your body for ticks. Make sure that your children also bathe or shower and check them for ticks as well.
- Wash and tumble dry your clothes.
- Don't forget to check your pets for ticks.
- If you find an attached tick -
 - Carefully [remove](#) it with a pair of fine-tipped tweezers.
 - Call your healthcare provider if you develop [symptoms of a tick-borne illness](#) 1 - 3 weeks following a bite. Symptoms may include rash, fever, body aches, fatigue, headache, stiff neck or disorientation.

Keep Mosquitoes and Ticks out of Your Yard

Look around your yard and neighborhood and remove any items that may collect standing water, such as buckets, old tires, toys and flowerpots.

- Mosquitoes can breed in small amounts of water in just a few days.
- Replace or repair torn window screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house.
- You can reduce the likelihood that ticks will live around your home by removing leaf litter, brush and woodpiles around your house and at the edge of your yard.

Beware of Bats

Bats are fun to watch as they flutter around at dusk. In many camp areas, the sighting of bats is common and normal; however, bats can be infected with [rabies](#) and may pose a risk for exposure to humans.

What To Do If You Find a Bat

- Get everyone out of the room, cabin, or tent and close the bat inside.
- Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a lab for rabies testing. Follow instructions for capturing bats.
- Knowing if a bat has rabies helps those who may have been exposed decide if they should get rabies post-exposure vaccines. This is especially important if someone was

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sleeping in the room where the bat was found because the bite of a bat can be very small and go unnoticed. Once symptoms of rabies begin, it is almost always fatal.

- If you are bitten by a bat, wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical advice right away. In Buncombe County go to the Emergency Department at Mission Hospital.
- Remind children to never touch a bat.

Don't forget to protect your pets!

While you're outside enjoying the weather, remember to [protect your pets](#) too. Keeping healthy pets will help keep you and your family healthy.

Dogs, cats and ferrets need to be kept up-to-date on their rabies vaccines. In Buncombe County you can get low-cost rabies vaccines for your furry friends at clinics sponsored by Buncombe County and the Asheville Humane Society. Click [here](#) to learn more. *(I'm waiting for permission for this hyperlink from Asheville Humane Society. Don't expect a problem.)*

Protect family pets from ticks and fleas by keeping them on a flea and tick control program. Talk to your veterinarian for advice on the appropriate anti-bug products to use on your pet.

You don't have to let the threat of illness from mosquitoes, ticks or bats dampen your outdoor fun in warm weather. Take these simple precautions, get on outside and enjoy! Have a safe and healthy spring and summer!

For More Information

- [Fight the Bite!](#)
Use repellent to protect yourself from mosquitoes and ticks.
- [West Nile Virus](#)
Find where recent outbreaks of this mosquito-borne disease have occurred and how to protect yourself.
- [Lyme Disease](#)
Includes prevention, transmission, and symptoms
- [Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever](#)
Includes prevention, transmission, and symptoms
- [Ticks](#)
Includes prevention tips, information on ticks found in the US, the diseases they spread and symptoms
- [Healthy Pets, Healthy People](#)
Enjoy your pets while protecting yourself against diseases they carry.