



Preventing Transmission of Tick-borne Illness



As we have all noticed, the media is awash with stories about ticks and tick-borne illness. At Kieve-Wavus, we are determined to help your daughter(s) and son(s) mitigate the risk of illness by following a proactive and camp-wide tick protocol. Will some of us still come into contact with ticks? Yes; however, we have plans in place and we will be ready for the little buggers. Below are some thoughts to guide your preparations for summer.

Prevention

Bug Spray. We encourage you to send your camper with your preferred tick repellent. The effectiveness of DEET has a great deal of science behind it, so we recommend it. However, lemon-eucalyptus oil is also CDC approved to repel ticks and may be useful if your child needs an alternative to DEET products. Spraying repellent on clothing such as hats, socks, bandanas, and shorts is encouraged and is appropriate for anyone who wishes to minimize contact with skin. For your convenience, we offer some insect repellent choices in the camp store.

Clothing Treatments. In addition to daily topical repellent, there are products for sale to use on clothes that repel ticks and mosquitoes for 3-4 weeks. The chemical Permethrin, which is recommended by the CDC, can be found already impregnated in the cloth of some outdoor clothing. Two common brand names are No Fly Zone and Insect Shield. Many outdoor retailers also sell a bottle of Permethrin spray that you can purchase and use to treat items at home. As in the past, we will be spraying packs, hats and boots of our Maine Trails campers before they head out to spend 22 days on the trail.

Tick Checks. You may be familiar with Med Minutes, our daily, individual, counselor-camper check-in sessions. These daily communications now include the questions "*Have you done your tick check today?*" and "*Did you find any?*" We also have laminated cards in the bathrooms and showers across campus that instruct in how to do a tick check. We will teach campers to check themselves as well. At home before camp you can be proactive by practicing tick checks. The trick is not to scare them, but some rehearsal counting freckles in 'tick territories' -- arm pits and groin -- and running their fingers across their scalp and behind their ears could help children know what "no ticks" looks and feels like as a baseline.

Treatment.

Removing ticks before they have had a chance to bite is the best way to prevent them from making us sick. However, bites may occur. If your son or daughter comes to us with an attached tick, we'll contact you to discuss treatment. Our medical director, in line with the CDC, recommends treatment with antibiotics for ticks that have been attached for more than 24-36 hours, or in any case where flu-like symptoms or fever are developing.

One of the greatest gifts you give your children is time and space to learn the lessons that can only be learned by spending time outdoors. At camp, we facilitate the logistics and structure, but Mother Nature provides the beauty and challenge. These transformational personal growth experiences come with risk, but together we can help mitigate the risk of tick-borne illness.

Thank you,
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