

# What Are Your Risks Working Outdoors?

Many residents in Canada both play and work in the outdoors through many of the federal, provincial, county and city agencies, recreation and tourism industries, utility companies, ranching, farming, and outdoor education.

Outdoor workers are at greater risk of exposure to tick-borne illnesses as they spend more time in potential tick habitats where encounters with ticks are more likely. Workers that deal directly with wildlife are also at an increased risk, as some diseases can be transmitted through blood, saliva, abscesses or scratches from the animals they are handling. Work sites with woods, bushes, grass, riparian areas or leaf litter are likely to have more ticks.

In most regions of Canada, those that work or play in the outdoors should take extra precautions to protect themselves in the spring, summer, and fall when ticks are most active. Though keep in mind ticks can be active all year.

Workers at risk of tick-borne diseases include, but are not limited to, those working in the following professions in Alberta:

Military Personnel, Natural Resource Agencies: City, County, Provincial, and Federal, City and County Parks and Recreation, Wildlife management, Forestry, Wildland and Structural Firefighting

Outdoor Education

Outfitting and Guiding (fishing, hunting, horseback riding, and other recreation)

Camp Staff and their kids (Summer camps, Boy Scouts, etc.)

Construction work

Trail building

Landscaping

Land surveying

Ranchers

Farmers

Pest Control

Railroad work

Oil field work

Utility work

All outdoor workers should check with their supervisor or employer if they have questions about possible exposure to ticks. Some employers provide tick safety information through Health and Safety manuals, tailgate safety sessions, or other internal policies. Employers wishing to provide their staff with tick awareness and safety training with Tick Awareness CANADA, should contact us @ [tickscanada@gmail.com](mailto:tickscanada@gmail.com). Prevention is key to outdoor workers safety and health!

Wearing repellent, and taking other precautions can help reduce your exposure while working outdoors.

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne disease in North America, and has been endemic in Canada since the 1980s

**Alberta** and **Canada** are home to many tick **species**. **Research** has shown that ticks can carry and **transmit** numerous **pathogens**, including **Lyme disease (Borrelia)**. **Ticks** are **vectors** and their food is blood. Ticks like to feed on **mice**, **birds**, other wildlife, pets and humans. Tick habitat is **grasses**, **bushes**, along **pathways**, under **leaves**, river valleys and **forests**. Basically wherever animals may travel and birds will fly.

To help avoid tick **bites** while outside, it is recommended to wear light colored **clothing, long sleeves**, pants tucked into **socks** and **repellent**.

Checking for ticks, **tick checks**, after spending time outside is very important. Check your **family** members, **pets, clothing** and **gear** for ticks. Change and place your clothing in a **dryer** on high heat for 20 minutes. Ticks love to hide on your body - **Shower** to remove any unattached ticks and then check all areas of your body – head, **hairline**, ears, **armpits**, back, **bellybutton, waistline, groin area**, behind knees, between toes...everywhere!

If you find an attached tick, be sure to remove it with fine tipped **tweezers** and save the tick in a sealed container for future **testing**. Signs of a tick illness could be: **flu** like **symptoms, fever, rash, fatigue, numbness**, etc. Seek medical attention, a **clinical diagnosis** can be made and then prompt **treatment**.

These 8 tick species include Ixodes angustus, Ixodes banksi, Ixodes cookei (groundhog tick), Ixodes gregsoni, Ixodes muris (mouse tick), Ixodes scapularis (blacklegged tick), Haemaphysalis leporispalustris (rabbit tick), and Dermacentor albipictus (winter tick)