

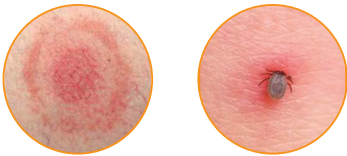
BITES - TICKS, FLEAS & SAND FLIES

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET BITTEN?

- When somebody gets bitten by an animal, reptile or insect it is important to treat the bite, especially if the bite involves venom or poison.
- When a venomous animal or insect bites, it injects its venom composed of proteins and other substances into the victim, which will immediately trigger the body's immune response for protection.
- The immune response leads to a typical inflammatory response, causing the skin to become red, warm, swollen and painful. The skin may be broken and become infected if the bite area is scratched.

TICK BITES

- Ticks do not always carry diseases and most bites are not serious. Once a tick latches onto the skin, it often moves to the warm, moist armpits and groin areas, feeding on blood and passing on any disease it carries. A tick bite can also trigger an allergic reaction.
- Infected ticks do not spread a disease until they have been attached to the host for at least 36 hours.
- The first sign of infection is usually a circular skin rash. Early symptoms may also include fever, headache and fatigue.



WHAT TO DO WITH TICK BITES

Prevention

To prevent tick bites, keep your arms, legs and head covered when outdoors. Use tick repellent with DEET (diethyltoluamide) or permethrin on clothing and skin. Check for ticks after spending time in grassy or wooded areas.

Treatment

- Do not try to pull the tick off the skin.
 - Ticks are relatively easy to remove with a pair of tweezers - Grip the tick firmly under the head and push down to disengage the teeth, then gently pull away. Once the tick has been removed, treat the bite area with antiseptic.
 - Do not scratch the bite because this will cause further swelling and increase the chances of infection.
- Most tick bites will heal within three weeks.

Consult a doctor immediately in case of severe headache and fever.

FLEA BITES

- Fleas are small, wingless, agile insects that live off the blood of their victim. Some people are very sensitive to flea bites and scratching can cause a wound or infection.
- Flea bites tend to occur in groups, along clothing constrictions and around the ankles. They often pass out undigested blood leaving tell tale blood spots on bed sheets. Flea bites can be seen as red bumps in lines or clusters.



PREVENTION OF FLEA BITES

- Find the source of the infestation.
 - If a pet is the source of the flea infestation, treat the pet, its bedding, household carpets and soft furnishings with an insecticide. Thoroughly vacuum the carpets and soft furnishings as well.
 - The best solution to avoid flea bites is to get rid of fleas on pets and in the home
 - Keep pets out of the bed
 - Regularly wash the linen and vacuum the rugs
 - Spray insecticides on infested areas.

SAND FLY BITES

- Many of these blood-sucking species are found on beaches or in the mountains.
- The bite is not painful but often causes an allergic response in the form of a red wheal which becomes very itchy.
 - The red wheal can be 2-5 cm wide. Avoid scratching the wheals; it makes them itch longer and can lead to infection.

WHAT TO DO AFTER BEING BITTEN

- Antihistamine tablets or creams can help.
- Some people also experience relief by applying ice to the bite.
- Bites should never be scratched as this increases the chance of the wound becoming infected.
- Perhaps the best treatment is to avoid getting bitten in the first place. Sand flies are more active at dawn and dusk, and on warm cloudy days so these are the times to take extra care.
- They are also attracted to darker clothing, so wear lighter colours and try to cover up as much as possible.
- Sand flies are also more likely to be found within about ten metres from running water. Their numbers tend to reduce at distances greater than this.

DISCLAIMER

TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.

