How to Choose Tick-Control Products

Serious diseases, including Lyme disease, can be carried by ticks. Once you’ve taken the recommended steps to identify tick-infested areas and reduce likely habitat around your property, you may decide to use control products to further reduce your risk of tick bites. Here are a few tips to help you select the most appropriate products.

Two types of tick-control products with different uses

- **Repellents**—products to keep ticks off humans
  - Apply directly to skin only if directed. Some repellents can only be used on clothing.
  - Repeat applications as directed.

- **Insecticides**—products that kill or repel ticks
  - *Products for use in outdoor areas:* Apply product to areas where ticks lay eggs and are most commonly found. For example: dense vegetation low to ground, areas with accumulated leaves, and other areas frequented by deer, squirrels, mice, and songbirds.
  - *Products for use on pets:* These products include insecticidal shampoos, dips, collars, and “spot-on products.” Do not use a product labeled for a cat on a dog or a product labeled for a dog on a cat. Do not use a product for a large animal on a smaller animal or a product for a smaller animal on a larger animal.

  *Do not use insecticides on human skin or clothing.*

Read and follow all the label directions

- Bring your reading glasses with you to the store, because you’ll need to read the product labels.
- Read the entire label and make sure that ticks are listed.
- Use EPA-registered tick products (have an EPA Reg. No. on the label) designed for what you want to do (see above). Note where the EPA Reg. No. is located on the label. This is like a Social Security number for the product. If you need more information quickly it will get you product-specific information from the manufacturer, the Maine Board of Pesticides Control (BPC), and/or the Northern New England Poison Center.
- Products with “CAUTION” on the label have lower risk and fewer personal protective equipment requirements (gloves, safety glasses, or masks, etc.) than those marked “WARNING” or “DANGER”.
- Be sure that you have the right equipment, including personal protective equipment for applying the product, and that you know how to use the equipment properly.
- If protective clothing and/or personal protective equipment is listed on the label, be sure to wear it when mixing and applying the product.

Other considerations

- If you’ve had an allergic reaction to a repellent, *try a different type of product.* If you have asthma or other breathing problems, *avoid aerosols.*
- Most pesticide poisoning in the home occurs when children access stored pesticide products. To reduce that potential, and to improve overall control, hire a licensed commercial applicator to help manage ticks. Contact the BPC for a list of licensed pesticide applicators.

For more information


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