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## Seasonal Safety Reminder

During a number of recent SAR training events, BC GSAR Volunteers have reported finding ticks on their clothing and equipment. We would like to remind all GSAR members to check frequently for ticks and provide the latest techniques for tick removal that was included in the update Ground Search and Rescue Manual.

### Ticks

Ticks are tiny bugs, about the size of a sesame seed, which feed on blood. Adult ticks can be distinguished from insects by having eight legs rather than six. They cannot jump or fly and do not drop from trees. They wait for hosts on the top of grasses and shrubs and attach themselves to the host as it brushes by. While most tick bites do not result in disease some do. Ticks have been found in BC carrying the organisms that cause numerous diseases such as Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Tularemia and Relapsing Fever. While the chances of getting these diseases are small, it is worth taking steps to avoid being bitten.

To protect yourself against tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails wherever possible when walking in tall grass or woods.
- Wear light coloured clothing. Tuck your top into your pants and tuck your pants into your boots or socks and consider wearing gaiters.
- Put insect repellent (containing DEET) onto clothing and all uncovered skin.
- Check clothing and scalp (covered or not) when leaving an area where ticks may live. Make sure lighting is good so that you will not miss seeing the ticks.
- Regularly check household pets, which go into tall grass and wooded areas.

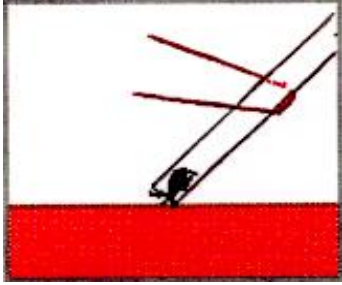
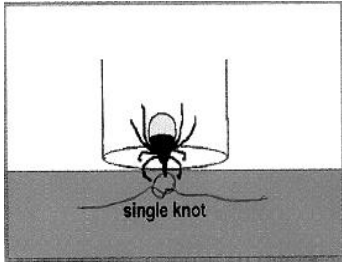
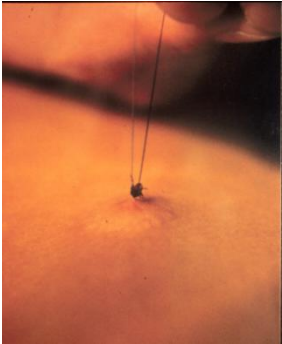
### Tick Removal:

Prompt removal of the tick is important, as the longer the tick remains on a person's body, the greater the chance of disease transmission.

Traditional removal methods such as tweezers (with or without twisting), fingers, petroleum jelly, fingernail polish, applying kerosene or use of a hot match head are not recommended as any one of these procedures can cause the tick to vomit, defecate or urinate. This can increase the likelihood of infection as the infectious agents are within the tick's bodily fluids.

Dr. E.K. Murakami (Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Family Practice, UBC) and Dr. S. Christie have developed a new field technique for removal of ticks. This new technique avoids any vomiting of the intestinal contents of the tick.

The equipment required for this technique is a piece of drinking straw and a piece of thread.

	<p><b>Step 1</b> The straw is placed over the wood tick and is held at a 45°. A piece of thread is placed around the straw and slid down to the skin.</p>
	<p><b>Step 2</b> The thread is brought down against the skin around the tick's jaw. A single knot is made and slowly tightened to close around the jaw of the tick.</p>
	<p><b>Step 3</b> Remove the straw and pull gently upwards on the string. It may take up to a couple minutes for the tick to release. This method avoids regurgitation of infectious agents and the tick remains alive and in one piece.</p>

*Figure #12: Tick Removal*

After the tick has been removed, place it in a container with a piece of damp gauze. Label container with date shipped, name of person bitten, what part of body bitten, what part of the province the tick came from.

This container should be taken to your local health unit as soon as possible for testing at the provincial laboratory.

Once the tick has been removed, clean the bite area with soap and water or rubbing alcohol. Wash hands with soap and water.

If you have the following symptoms within days or weeks after being bitten by a tick please report them to your physician immediately:

- General symptoms of headache, muscle and joint pains, fatigue or weakness of the muscles of the face.
- Skin rash, especially one that looks like a 'Bull's Eye'. It may or may not be where the bite was.

**For any GSAR health and safety related questions please contact the Joint Health and Safety Committee at, [ohs@bcsara.com](mailto:ohs@bcsara.com).**