Fact Sheet Tick Removal

U.S. ARMY CENTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

REMOVE TICKS PROMPTLY

Grasp the tick's mouthparts against the skin with pointed tweezers (see Fig. 1).

Pull back slowly and steadily with gentle force until the tick can be eased out of the skin (see Figs. 2-3).

BE PATIENT - The tick's central mouthpart, called the hypostome, is covered with sharp barbs, sometimes making removal difficult (see inset).

DO NOT pull back sharply. This may tear the mouthparts from the body of the tick, leaving them embedded in the skin.

DO NOT PANIC - if the mouthparts do break off. The mouthparts alone cannot transmit Lyme disease because the infective body of the tick is no longer attached. However, to prevent secondary infection, remove the mouthparts as you would a splinter.

DO NOT squeeze the body of the tick. This may force fective fluid into the wound site.

DO NOT apply substances such as vaseline, fingernail polish, repellents, pesticides, or a lighted match to the tick while it is still attached. These materials might agitate the tick and cause it to regurgitate infective fluid into the wound site.

After removal, wash the wound and apply antiseptic.

Save the tick in a jar or vial for identification should you later develop disease symptoms. Preserve the tick by either adding some alcohol to the jar or by keeping it in the freezer. Species confirmation of the tick may facilitate the physician's diagnosis and treatment.

A tick needs a blood meal from a host in order to molt (progress to the next stage of it's life cycle), and to reproduce (lay eggs). This feeding process continues for several days to a week until the tick is fully engorged with blood. It then releases it's hold from the host, drops off, and subsequently molts or lays eggs.

If the tick is infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi* (the agent of Lyme disease), it can transmit the infection to the host during feeding process. As the tick feeds, the bacteria multiply in the tick's midgut and migrate to it's salivary glands, from which point they are carried in the saliva to the wound site.

Research shows that successful transmission of *B. burgdorferi* requires the tick be attached for 24 to 48 hours. Therefore, it is important to remove attached ticks as soon as they are discovered. The sooner infective ticks are removed, the less likely they will be able to transmit infection.

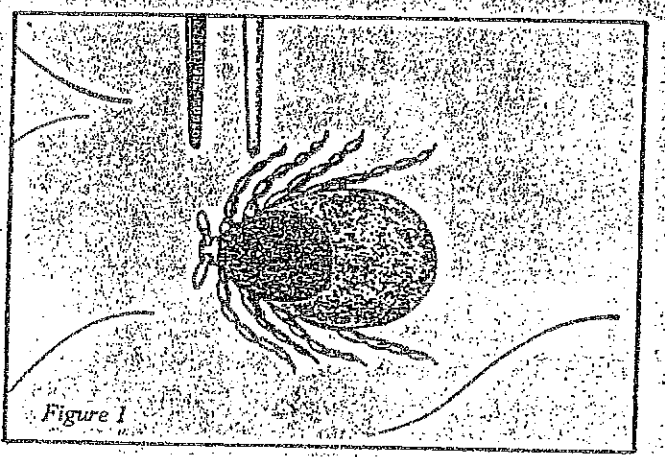

Figure 1

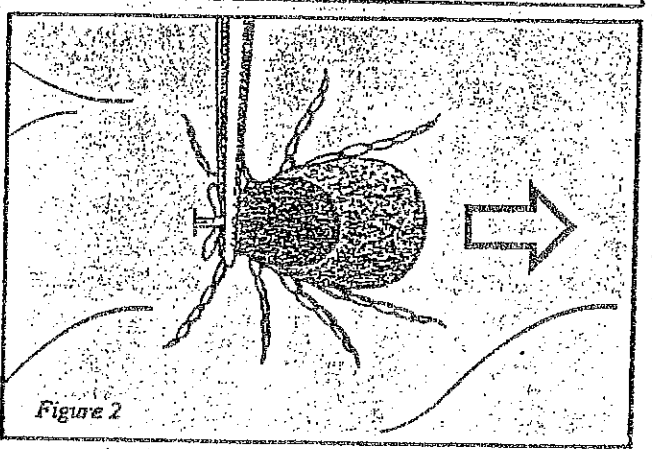

Figure 2

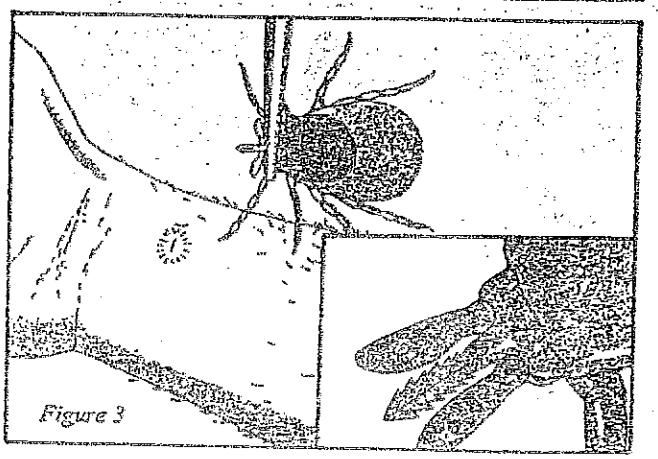

Figure 3

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