

Press release

Watch out for ticks with the return of warmer weather!

The return of warmer weather is particularly conducive to walks in natural surroundings, including woods and forests, as well as activities in the garden. It is therefore a good time to recall the precautions to take in order to avoid tick bites – also unfortunately in season. Especially active in the spring and autumn, ticks remain the most common vectors of pathogens responsible for infectious diseases in Europe. A single bite is enough to transmit the Lyme disease bacterium, the main tick-borne disease in France. Here is a reminder of the right reflexes to adopt to protect yourself.

Ticks are arachnids that are found mainly in wooded areas and also in gardens in the spring and autumn. In Europe, they are the most common vectors of pathogens responsible for infectious diseases, affecting both animals and humans. Ticks can become infected by pathogens (bacteria, viruses, parasites) when feeding on the blood of the animals or humans to which they attach themselves. They then transmit these pathogens when attaching to new hosts.

Vigilance to guard against the risk of transmission of Lyme disease

The main human disease associated with ticks in France is Lyme disease, caused by a bacterium belonging to the group *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In the event of infection, several days after the tick bite, erythema migrans (a characteristic red "bull's eye" rash on the skin) appears, usually around the bite site, and spreads outwards in a circular pattern. At this stage, an antibiotic treatment can effectively treat the disease. However, without treatment the disease can cause skin, muscle, nerve and joint disorders that may be highly disabling.

Adopting the right reflexes can help reduce this risk:

- Use repellents, opting for those with marketing authorisation and complying with their conditions of use (all this information is given on the product's label, packaging and/or leaflet).
- Wear closed shoes and light-coloured clothing (to more easily identify the ticks on the surface of the fabric) that covers the body.
- Avoid walking through long grass, bushes and low branches and keep to signposted paths.
- Check your body when returning from walks and remove any attached ticks immediately using a tick remover (never use ether or any similar product).
- If you have been bitten, disinfect the wound thoroughly.
- If an erythema migrans should appear following a tick bite, see your doctor immediately.

An application to help understand and prevent Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases

As part of the CiTIQUE research project, researchers from ANSES, INRA and the National Veterinary School of Maisons-Alfort have developed the Signalement-Tique website and smartphone app.

This app enables walkers to report tick bites and receive advice if bitten. Through the use of this application and the reports received, maps of tick populations can be drawn up to help implement targeted preventive measures.

Thanks to the joint efforts of citizens and researchers, the data collected will also further our knowledge and improve understanding and prevention of Lyme disease and other diseases caused by tick-borne pathogens, particularly as part of the CiTIQUE research project supported by ANSES, INRA and the University of Lorraine.

The app can be downloaded from the AppStore and Play Store platforms.

Tick repellents: opt for products with marketing authorisation

As part of the national plan to combat Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, ANSES assessed the effectiveness of the biocide repellents against ticks that are available on the market. Because of the gradual implementation of the Biocides Regulation governing repellents, the products available on the market are not yet subject to marketing authorisation and have therefore not yet undergone any assessment.

In this context, ANSES recommends opting for repellent products with marketing authorisation. This is stated on the product's label, packaging and/or leaflet and ensures, under the recommended conditions of use, effective protection against ticks and the absence of harmful effects to human health and the environment.