

## **What to Know About Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever**

It is that time of year when the weather is nice, days are longer, and everyone is spending more time outside. However, it is also the season for Rocky Mountain Spotted fever (RMSF). RMSF occurs in the months of April – September and North Carolina is one of the most common states RMSF is seen. RMSF is a bacterial infection carried by the American dog tick and the Rocky Mountain wood tick. When an infected tick bites a human it is entered into the bloodstream and causes an infection. As early as one day after the tick bite, the person can experience a fever, rash, achiness. However, these are symptoms of many other illnesses that are not as serious as RMSF. Other later symptoms can include, joint pain, abdominal pain, headache and diarrhea. The three most important components are rash, fever and tick bite. However, many people don't even realize that a tick has bitten them.

RMSF can cause serious illness and many people are hospitalized which can have long-term complications such as paralysis, gangrene, hearing loss, loss of bladder or bowel control and even death.

The best way to prevent RMSF is limit tick exposure. It is unreasonable to stay inside for six months out of the year. Therefore, there are several things that can be done to decrease your chances of getting RMSF. Try to wear jeans if in wooded areas and carefully inspect your entire body for possible exposure to ticks, tick bites or rashes (including your hair and scalp region.) Tuck your pants into your socks to prevent ticks from crawling up your pants. Application of insect repellent containing DEET can be applied to the skin and to your clothing that will last for several hours. However, children should not be exposed to this product. There are several products market for ticks that can be applied to children that do not contain DEET. Make sure to read labels.

If you find a tick on your body, do not try folklore remedies such as burning it with a match, applying it with Vaseline or bleach. These remedies can irritate the tick, which causes more of the tick's saliva with the bacteria to be released into your bloodstream. There are several kits over the counter to remove a tick. However, a pair of fine-tipped tweezers and a pair of gloves will work just fine. Grasp the tick and pull upward. Do not twist or jerk the tick, which can cause part of the tick to break off which can still expose you to infection. If pieces do break off, try to remove with tweezers and contact your health care provider if you develop any symptoms. After the tick is completely removed, wash the tick bite site and your hands with soap and warm water. Place the tick in a bag, put it in the freezer until you are able to bring it to your health care provider.

RMSF is an infection that can be limited with taking proper precautions and being aware of your surroundings. Therefore, if you are going to be outside this spring and summer season, use the recommendations and information in this article to arm yourself against exposure to RMSF. If you want further information regarding this topic, log onto [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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