

## Picking up Leaves Around Your Home? Be aware that Ticks might be lurking!

The trees are almost bare of leaves and you might be starting to pick them up before the first appreciable snow of the season. The Bedford Board of Health and the Middlesex Tick Task Force (MTTF) want to remind you that you don't have to be walking in the woods to be bitten by a deer tick, it can happen around your own home! Deer ticks in our area can carry the tick-borne diseases that are prevalent in our area: Lyme, Anaplasmosis (Ehrlichiosis), and Babesiosis. These diseases can seriously impact an individual's health and life-style. The MTTF is comprised of local officials and representatives from Acton, Bedford, Carlisle, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln and Weston who have set a mission of providing tick-borne disease education for residents of our area.

It is still important to be thinking about preventing tick bites during this time of year when thinking about putting your yard and lawn to bed for the winter season. It is important to remember that deer ticks are not out in the middle of your lawn, they live where yards border wooded areas, ornamental plantings and gardens, or anywhere it is shaded and there are leaves with high humidity. While removing leaf litter from around your home is a good way to remove or reduce conditions that allow ticks to survive in your yard, it is important to remember that you can be exposed to deer ticks while doing this seasonal activity.

Before heading out to rake leaves or remove brush this fall, make sure you follow these tips to reduce your exposure to deer ticks that may carry disease: 1) Keep in mind: ticks start low and crawl up; they do not jump, fly or drop from trees; they are down on the ground and crawl up until they find a good spot to attach. Tucking pant legs into socks is a good way to keep ticks on the outside where they may be seen or get brushed off. 2) Tick Repellents that contain DEET can be used on your exposed skin to prevent a tick from latching on. Permethrin is a product that can be used on your clothes. Always follow the product instructions and use repellents with no more than 30% DEET on children. Never use DEET repellents on infants. 3) Ticks can attach anywhere, in particular, they will find spots like the back of your knee, around waistbands, under armpits or any other constricted place. After raking or any time after you have been in tick habitat you should thoroughly check your entire body and remove attached ticks immediately. Once attached, ticks do not wash off in the shower.

For more information on tick bite prevention you can contact the Bedford Board of Health at 781-275-6507, click on the tick information tab on [www.bedfordma.gov/health](http://www.bedfordma.gov/health) or view the following video: [www.Tinyurl.com/tickbiteprevention](http://www.Tinyurl.com/tickbiteprevention).

As part of its educational campaign, the MTTF has also created a short survey. The results will allow local boards of health to better understand their town residents' baseline knowledge of tick-borne illnesses, experience with these diseases, and risk of exposure, in order to tailor future educational programs toward the needs of their communities. The survey also contains answers to questions about ticks, tick-borne illnesses, and prevention strategies for residents and their pets. Residents and workers in our local towns are invited to take the survey online at <http://tinyurl.com/MiddlesexTickSurvey>.