

# Ticks and tick bites – everything you should know

by Hanlie du Plessis

**Ticks are blood-sucking parasites that are often found in tall grass. They will rest themselves at the tip of the grass. This allows them to easily attach to a passing animal or human. They suck blood and will generally drop off the animal when full, but this may take several days. There are hundreds of kinds of ticks, and they can be found almost everywhere.**



## **What does a tick bite look and feel like?**

A person who gets bitten by a tick usually won't feel anything at all. There might be a little redness around the bite mark. If you think you've been bitten by a tick, visit your doctor or clinic. Some ticks carry disease and can pass it on to people.

## **What should you do?**

If you ever find a tick on yourself, make sure to remove it completely. Using tweezers, grab the tick as close as you can to your skin and pull the tick off in one motion. Do not cover the tick with petroleum jelly, rubbing alcohol or fingernail polish, since these don't help the tick to come out. In fact, it can make things more complicated. If any of the tick parts are left behind in the skin, it should be removed using a sterile needle or pin. Once the tick is removed, you may want to put it in a jar to save it and show it to your doctor.

## **What will the doctor do?**

Most tick bites do not have to be treated by doctors. But if the tick was carrying diseases and passed it on, any symptoms that might mean you are sick will be treated with antibiotics. Your doctor may ask to see the tick to help make a diagnosis. If these diseases are treated early on, there should not be any lasting effect on your health.

## **How do you avoid getting bitten?**

Ticks like spending time in shrubbery and grass, where they can remain close to the ground in order to climb onto people or animals that pass by. If you are walking in long grass or in the veld, wear long sleeves and long pants, and tuck your pants into your socks. Wearing an insect repellent might also help.

Dogs are also very good at picking up ticks in their coats. Wash or dip the dog regularly with a tick shampoo or dip and give your dog a tick collar. **UM**