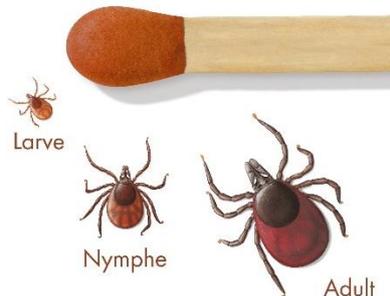


Start into the hiking season:

## Protect yourself against ticks

Tick bites are treacherous as they usually remain unnoticed. The reason for this is: tick saliva contains narcotic substances. Infected ticks are dangerous and may transmit borrelia (bacteria) or viruses. Borreliosis may affect different organs: the skin, the nervous system or joints. Annually, 25 to 100 out of 100,000 people in Germany (depending on the region) are affected by borreliosis, 150 to 300 out of 100,000 in Austria.



### Bacteria or viruses?

Less frequently, ticks transmit viruses which may cause different forms of meningitis – summarized under the name of tick-borne encephalitis (TBE). In contrast to borreliosis bacteria which may frequently be treated with antibiotics, there is no specific treatment against TBE. However, there is a vaccination against TBE diseases, which is in particular recommended for people who live or make holidays in typical distribution areas of TBE viruses. Currently, large parts of Bavaria, Baden Wuerttemberg and parts of South Hesse and Thuringia are declared TBE risk regions, but also regions in Austria, Switzerland and large areas of Eastern Europe. Only two percent of ticks in risk regions are infected by the virus and not every infection automatically leads to the outbreak of a disease. But still, according to information of a magazine on medical training of 2017, the number of TBE cases in Germany increased by 59 percent from 2015 to 2016 – 351 cases were reported in 2016.

### Precaution is better than treatment

The best precaution is preventing bites. In the case of ticks this means, if possible, not stalking through high grass, bushes or undergrowth “bare legged”. And even if stuffing trousers into socks is a good start: the little creatures may crawl along clothes for quite a distance to reach bare skin. In the evening at the latest, the whole body ought to be scrutinized for ticks – not only uncovered skin but also scalp, armpits and the genital region.

### Correctly removing ticks

- Remove the tick from the skin immediately – best using a special tick forceps, a pointed tweezer, if need be with a needle or a sharp knife
- Grip the tick as close to the skin as possible, in front of its body, at its mouth parts and pull it out by gently jiggling it
- Don't panic if parts of the tick remain in the skin – such parts of the sting are no increased health hazard
- Twisting it makes no sense as the holding organ is not set up like a thread
- Caution: squash the body of the tick as little as possible!
- Do not put oil or adhesives onto the tick – this irritates the animal and it produces more saliva which increases the risk of a transmission of diseases
- If in doubt, contact a doctor