

Dear parents,

## Ticks and Lyme Disease

Your son/daughter has been taking part in activities where they *may* have been bitten by ticks. Some ticks can carry diseases, including Lyme disease. *The risk is low and there is no cause for concern*, the purpose of this letter is to make you aware of the *potential* for infection and of the symptoms to look out for and forms part of our risk assessment for the activity. If caught, the disease can be treated with antibiotics.

### **Ticks**

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures with three life-cycle stages, the smallest of which is about the size of a pinhead. They are frequently found in woodland, moorland and other grassy areas, where they feed on the blood of mammals (e.g. cows, deer, etc...) and birds. They are usually found close to the ground, especially in moist, shaded areas. Ticks contain the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* which can spread to humans through their bite.

### **Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* which is spread by the bite of a tick. This bacterium can cause the person who is bitten to develop a rash. It is important to state and realise that not all bites by a tick will result in the person bitten contracting Lyme Disease.

The earliest and most common symptom of Lyme disease is a pink or red circular rash that develops around the area of the bite, three to 30 days after someone is bitten. The rash is often described as looking like a bulls-eye on a dartboard.

### **What to check for**

Scouts have been instructed to check themselves for ticks but they should do so again when they get home. Ensure that both skin and hair are checked, and particularly warm moist areas such as the groin, back of knees, armpits and neck.

Remove the tick and wash the area as soon as possible afterwards with soap and water. If possible save the tick (store in a plastic bag or carefully trap it between two pieces of sellotape).

For guidance on how to remove ticks see <http://www.bada-uk.org/defence/removal/indextickremoval.php>. If using tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, taking care not to squeeze the body, and pull upwards with a steady, even pressure.

***DO NOT use petroleum jelly, any liquid solutions, or freeze / burn the tick, as this will stimulate it to regurgitate its stomach contents, increasing the chance of infection.***

Check the skin area concerned over the next few weeks for a rash. Initial redness and swelling on the same day as the bite itself is normal and does not indicate infection. If a rash or other symptoms develop, see your doctor report being bitten by a tick (if you saved it – take the tick with you).

If you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of the leadership team.