

4-3-20 Ticks, Mosquitoes and COVID 19

What do ticks and mosquitoes have in common with the global pandemic? The best way to avoid diseases spread by ticks and mosquitoes is to avoid the bite. The best way to avoid disease from COVID-19 is to avoid the virus. While the specific measures differ in their details, avoidance is the keyword.

We are in this for the long-haul, folks. Ticks and mosquitoes are never going away, and this new virus will be here for a while until we can get a vaccine for it.

This is a good time of year to be reminded about self-protection measures against tick borne diseases as we get outside for walks and doing yard work. Some of us are out of work and have more time for outdoor activities also.

Pulling socks up over your pants, putting coats and pants into the dryer when you come back into the house and conducting a tick check and taking a shower soon after your outdoor activities are high on the list of avoidance measures. When walking in the woods, stick to the trail, avoiding going through tall grass and low brush areas, as that is where the ticks are.

Another way to avoid tick bites is by spraying Permethrin onto your pants, socks, gloves and shoes. It is not intended for the skin and you must allow it to dry on the clothing. Used in this way, it is considered safe. Repellent might (and only might) repel ticks, but Permethrin kills them.

Social distancing and sanitizing remain the two most useful avoidance measures for COVID-19, along with the common cold and seasonal influenza. These viruses are spread via heavy droplets when the sick person coughs or sneezes. If the person did not cover the mouth with a tissue or cough into the elbow area, those droplets go out about three feet and sink to the floor or other nearby surfaces such as counters.

The now well-known six-foot measurement is based on an abundance of caution to stay out of that three-foot droplet zone.

If the person who coughed did not immediately wash his or her hands, whatever is touched next can hold that virus. Once you begin to make note of frequently touched surfaces, the list grows. Doorknobs, light switches, counter tops, faucet handles, telephones, iPad screen, computer mouse, the backs and arms

of chairs, your favorite coffee mug and water bottle are high on the list of surfaces needing cleaning.

The reason they need cleaning is we return to all these spots so often and when we're not sick it's easy to lose track of what has been touched. If we begin to make it a habit to notice that and make it a habit to use good cough etiquette and a habit to clean these frequently touched surfaces often, these measures go a long way to prevent the spread of any virus.

Please note that I'm using the word cleaning rather than the word sanitizing. Hand sanitizer is handy for sure. However, for those who are freaking out that they cannot find bleach or alcohol, or EPA approved sanitizers, please note that soap and water are great at removing all germs including viruses. There are advantages to soap and water also. Using cloths with a little texture, such as old face cloths or cut up towels, has the advantage of allowing that soap and water to scrub the surface. Use a second cloth and a second container of water for rinsing that light switch or doorknob. These cloths can be washed and dried. Do not use sponges. Sponges stay moist and breed germs.

Another advantage of soap and water for cleaning surfaces is that it is not harsh like bleach or spray sanitizers. Many people are sensitive to strong cleaners and disinfectants, and in some people, it triggers their asthma.

Washing surfaces with soap and water will successfully open the virus' protective envelope, allowing it to be destroyed, just as happens with disinfectants.

If you do have sanitizers and/or disinfectants, please read the instructions and please note that they are meant to be applied secondarily after cleaning and allowed to air dry. It is extremely important that you read the ingredients of any kind of cleaner. Many household cleaners have ammonia in them. Those cleaners must never be mixed with bleach products. Bleach and ammonia create a deadly gas that can kill you.

Let's not kill anyone while trying to save ourselves.

Stronger is not better! Please do not use full strength bleach; you will only harm and compromise your mucus membranes, making you more vulnerable to viruses.

Add 1/3 cup bleach to a gallon of water for your homemade surface disinfectant. (This is too strong for food contact surfaces and must be rinsed off.)

In addition to social distancing and good hygiene, avoiding touching our eyes, nose and mouth is important because we cannot see the germs on our hands. Touching our eyes, nose or mouth allows the germs that were on those surfaces, such as the doorknob, to get into our body.

While most people become sick because they had close contact with somebody else who is sick, COVID-19 has now passed over a new threshold. It is thought that the “community spreading” that we are now seeing in people who had no known contact with a sick person, most likely acquired it from germs on a surface, then being brought into their eyes, nose or mouth.

If you are using hand sanitizer frequently please also add thick hand lotion to your regime to avoid the skin getting dry and cracked, which provide areas for viruses to enter.

Air handshakes only and please smile. Lots of smiles and please and thank you-s, for everyone's cooperation is needed.

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