Easy way to remove a tick

ick, a tick

I was grumpy all morning after realizing that my dog was out of tick repellent. Really grumpy. I did not like the thought of having to remove a tick from my dog.

After all, on the East Coast of the United States, we are seeing ticks galore. All month long, parents who have had to remove a tick have been bringing us presents such as the one pictured here. Yes, that is a tick you see nicely trapped in tape. Sometimes when parents bring us a tick, it’s still clinging to the child and they ask us to remove it. To save you a trip to the doctor’s office, here is a quick refresher on how to pluck the bugs off:

How to remove a tick:

1. Take a deep breath and **pretend that it's just a speck of lint**—not an ugly critter with a bloated stomach and writhing legs.
2. **Use tweezers** and firmly clasp the head. If the tick is tiny, you will end up grabbing the entire body.
3. **Pull the tick straight up and off**. Hint: Press down on the skin on either side of the tick so that the skin doesn't pull up when you pull the tick off. This lessens any pinching sensation your child may feel.

How NOT to remove a tick:

Please do not try to burn a tick off—you'll just burn your child's skin.
Avoid suffocation techniques such as covering a tick with petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or nail polish. These techniques are not very effective, they allow the tick to stay on for a longer period of time, and also they may cause the tick to become slippery and difficult to grasp.

What to do after you have removed the tick:

After removal, if the tick's head is left behind, don't go digging for it. Just like a tiny splinter, your skin will naturally try to expel it. Soaking the area in warm water will help the process along. Don't worry about disease transmission: there is not any disease stuck in a tick's head.

Wash the skin where the tick was using soap and water as you would any cut to prevent a skin infection. A small, minimally tender, pimple-like bump is a common reaction which may linger for a few days. This bump is an irritation response of the skin. If the tick was a deer tick (typically the size of a

poppy or sesame seed), watch for the rash of Lyme disease that appears as a flat, pink, round patch about a week later. The patch may clear in the center and grows to at least 2 1/2 inches across.

My daughter told me that once, a girl at her lunch table had a tick on her. None of the kids could pick it off and the girl sat screaming until the lunch lady came over to help her. Maybe you'll be the lucky adult called over to help next time.

Just remember…pretend it's a speck of lint.

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