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# Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE)

– What you should know before you travel

Endorsed by



**ENCEPHALITIS  
SOCIETY**

*The brain inflammation charity*

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# What is tick-borne encephalitis (TBE)?

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral disease spread by ticks that is prevalent in Europe and other parts of the world. TBE virus transmission to humans most commonly occurs through the bite of an infected tick.\*



You can be bitten by an infected tick at any time of the year, but tick activity is at its highest during the spring and early summer.

TBE is an infection of the central nervous system. Most patients with TBE will recover but up to 1 in 3 will suffer long-term complications.

## No specific treatment

There is no specific treatment for TBE, only supportive measures to help manage the symptoms.

## Lyme disease

Ticks can carry many diseases including Lyme disease. Although both are transmitted by the bite of a tick, Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is usually treated with antibiotics whereas TBE is a viral infection for which there is no treatment. However there are ways to help prevent TBE.

\*It is also possible but uncommon, to contract TBE by consuming infected milk or milk products.



# What are the symptoms of TBE?

- Most people infected with the TBE virus have no symptoms. But if there are symptoms, they usually appear one-two weeks after being bitten.
- TBE can appear in two phases, initially presenting with flu-like symptoms including high temperature (fever), headache, tiredness and general body aches.
- This can last for around five days. Then, there may be a week with no symptoms, which is followed by the second phase of the illness, when the brain is affected.
- Most people with TBE recover fully, but some suffer long-term complications.

**1 in 50**

Up to 1 in every 50 people who develop symptoms of TBE will die from the infection.

## Possible consequences of TBE include:



High fever



Headache



Nausea



Muscle spasms



**Ataxia**  
(group of disorders that affect co-ordinations, balance and speech)



Seizures



Paralysis



Temporary and long-term loss of consciousness

# Where are people at risk of TBE?

- TBE infected ticks can be found across parts of Europe, including some areas of the UK, Asia and Tunisia.
- Where you spend your time can increase your likelihood of being bitten by a tick. Ticks live outdoors, near the ground in grassy areas, including cities, parks and gardens.

Human cases of TBE have been reported in over

**33**  
countries

Ticks infected with the TBE virus are not confined to one country and can spread the infection.

It is recommended that you consider taking preventative measures to help protect against TBE if you are travelling to the following countries and participating in outdoor activities (such as visiting rural areas, walking, cycling or camping), which could increase your risk of coming into contact with infected ticks:

- Albania
- Austria
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- China
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Romania
- Russia
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Ukraine

● Countries with areas where there is risk of TBE for UK travellers





Activities that may put people at risk of being bitten by a tick include:



Sightseeing



Picnicking



Camping



Hiking or walking



Biking



Horse riding



Military training



Fishing

- People are most at risk of coming into contact with a tick in the warmer months. Ticks are found throughout the year but are most active from March to November when temperatures are above 6° Celsius.
- Ticks live near the ground and can be found both within or outside cities, in parks and gardens, as well as forests and meadows.
- Therefore outdoor activities can put people at risk of being bitten by a tick.



# How can you help protect yourself from tick bites and TBE?

If you are planning to travel to any country with areas where there is risk of TBE, before travelling speak to your healthcare professional about how you can help protect yourself, friends and family against TBE.

If you think you might be at risk now or in the near future, consider taking these precautions to minimise your risk:



Avoid heavily tick-infested areas of forest and woodland from spring until autumn, where possible



Wear light-colored clothing including long-sleeved tops and long trousers tucked into socks



Use effective insect repellents



Talk to a healthcare professional for advice on whether to consider vaccination



Check your body for ticks regularly



Remove ticks as soon as possible by using a pair of fine tipped tweezers

## How can I remove a tick?

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- Pull upward with steady, even pressure without jerking or twisting and avoid squeezing the tick's body.
- Wash the bite with warm soapy water and apply antiseptic (e.g. alcohol or iodine) to the area.





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