

# Hoping to avoid ticks this summer? There's an app for that

June 12 2020, by Kim Ward, Jean Tsao

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Summer is back and so are ticks—and the potential to get Lyme disease. With more people eager to be out in the woods after months at home, a Michigan State University researcher, who helped develop The Tick

App, warns of the possible increased risk for getting Lyme disease.

"We don't want people to be afraid. We just want them to take a few precautions so they can still enjoy being outside," said Jean Tsao, an associate professor in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at MSU who researches ticks and [tick](#)-borne illness. More than 300,000 people contract Lyme [disease](#) each year, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control.

"We know being in nature is good for people's health, but we just don't want them to have a bad experience with ticks or tick-borne diseases," Tsao said.

Tsao worked with scientists at Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin to develop a smartphone application, The Tick App. The app provides information on ways to prevent tick exposure. The app also shows how to identify different kinds of ticks and the diseases they transmit.

In addition, app users have the opportunity to be citizen scientists and help researchers understand how [human behavior](#) influences the risk of contracting ticks. Close to 3,000 people used the app in 2019, Tsao said.

"We're interested in knowing if people use [prevention methods](#), which prevention methods are used and what factors might influence the prevention methods used," Tsao said. "These data will aid the development of more effective prevention strategies. "

Tsao said one of the best ways to prevent contact ticks is to avoid their habitat.

"When hiking, it's important to remember to not stray from the trail," she said. "This is particularly relevant now during the coronavirus crisis

since people need to social distance by staying 6 feet away from others, even on trails."



Jean Tsao is an associate professor in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University and study researcher. Credit: Michigan State University

Also, people should do a thorough tick check after being in tick habitat and take a shower or bath to reduce the chances of getting Lyme disease.

Lastly, Tsao said if you do get bitten by a tick, carefully grab it with tweezers at the point closest to your skin to remove it. Then, take a clear photo and submit it to The Tick App so the team can identify the species.

Afterward, put the tick in a [plastic bag](#) labeled with the date and geographic location where you think you may have contacted it, then store it in your freezer.

"If you start feeling ill, go to a doctor and show him or her your tick," Tsao said. "The species and degree of swelling can help with diagnosis and treatment. But don't panic. Just be aware, take proper precautions and enjoy being outside this summer."

Download The Tick App for free [here](#) or find it on Google Play or the App Store.

**More information:** Preventing tick bites, from the Centers for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/index.html)

Provided by Michigan State University

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