

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# Tick Submission and Testing

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## Tick Submission

### Q1. How do I submit a tick for identification?

PHO's laboratory only accepts ticks from healthcare providers and public health units. If you collected a tick from yourself or someone else and would like to submit it for identification, please seek advice from your healthcare provider or your [public health unit](#). The PHO laboratory only accepts ticks found on humans.

Healthcare providers submitting a tick should submit it to a Licensed Specimen Collection Centre. The Licensed Specimen Collection Centre will forward the tick to PHO's laboratory.

### Q2. Why should I submit a tick for identification to my healthcare provider or public health unit?

The primary purpose of tick identification at PHO's laboratory is to monitor new and emerging tick populations in Ontario. This voluntary process helps collect information on which areas in Ontario have a higher number of certain ticks. In turn, this information can be used to develop local messaging on preventing tick bites in the region.

### Q3. Why do some healthcare providers and public health units NOT accept ticks for identification?

Certain parts of Ontario already have established tick populations, and submitting ticks from these known areas does not provide additional information. Please follow the advice of your public health unit or healthcare provider to determine the utility of submitting a tick. If you are concerned about tick bites and potential exposure to pathogens, please consult with your healthcare provider. You can also submit ticks for identification through the eTick.ca website (<https://etick.ca/>) or application that considers ticks collected from animals or the environment.

### Q4. What happens after the tick has been identified?

The healthcare provider or public health unit that submitted the tick for identification will receive a report with the name of the tick species identified, for example: "*Ixodes scapularis* found". No additional testing is performed.

### Q5. Can I email a picture of a tick for identification?

PHO's laboratory does not accept emailed photos of ticks for identification. Only physical ticks removed from a human body and submitted by a public health unit or a healthcare provider are accepted for identification at PHO. You can also submit ticks for identification through the eTick.ca website (<https://etick.ca/>) or application that considers ticks collected from animals or the environment.

## **Q6. What is the best way to submit multiple ticks?**

If multiple ticks were removed from a single person:

- Submit all ticks in one container and label with the person's identifiers , at minimum –the full name, date of birth, health card number, date of collection.
- Submit one completed [Tick Identification Surveillance Form](#)

If ticks were removed from multiple persons:

- Submit tick(s) in separate containers per each person and label each container with the respective person's identifiers
- Submit a [Tick Identification Surveillance Form](#) per each person

For information on other criteria, see the [tick submission checklist](#) at the end of this document.

## **Q7. Does PHO's laboratory return ticks submitted for identification?**

No, PHO's laboratory does not return ticks received for identification.

# Tick Identification

## **Q1. What is the turnaround time for tick identification at PHO's laboratory?**

Tick identification usually takes up to 21 days. However, it could take longer in peak months, which are from May/July to October/November.

# Tick Identification Result

## **Q1. How are results used?**

Tick identification at PHO provides data to monitor emerging tick populations in Ontario. Results are used to inform PHO and public health unit staff where to conduct active tick surveillance, which is then used to update the [Ontario Lyme Disease Estimated Risk Areas Map](#) each year.

## **Q3. Will the turnaround time affect the clinical management of individuals bitten by submitted ticks?**

Individuals should be managed based on their tick exposure, potential transmission of tick-borne pathogens in the area, as well as any relevant clinical signs and symptoms. Individual management should not rely on the tick submission process.

## **Q4. How are results relayed to individuals bitten by submitted ticks?**

Reports from PHO's laboratory are only available to the healthcare provider or the public health unit that submitted the tick. If the individual would like to know the tick identification results, they should consult with their healthcare provider or public health unit, depending on who submitted the tick. Due to privacy concerns, laboratories do not provide results directly to the general public.

# Tick Submission Checklist at Public Health Ontario

## Tick source

- Tick(s) must be collected from a human source only.

## Form

- Ticks must be submitted with the PHO [Tick Identification Form](#). If any other form is used, the tick will not be identified.
- All mandatory information must be completed on the form. Ticks submitted with incomplete information on the form will not be identified.
- The form must have the name and address of the healthcare provider or health unit that submitted the tick.
- The form must also have the name and address of the individual who had the tick on them.
- The name of the individual who had the tick on them must be the same on the form AND on the container label. If this information does not match exactly on both the form AND the container label, the tick will not be identified.

**Note:** Public Health Ontario's laboratory does not return back to sender any specimen submitted for tick identification.

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For more information about PHO, visit: [publichealthontario.ca](https://publichealthontario.ca).

