Beware of ticks
Ectoparasites and carrier of various diseases
Have you noticed a small dark spot in the hollow of your knee, your neck or under your armpit? Upon a closer look you will see: A tick has stung you and is now feeding on your blood. This is not only unpleasant, but it could also be dangerous.

Because of the increasingly mild weather, the risk of being stung by a tick is also rising.

**TBEV**

Ticks can infect you with dangerous viruses and bacteria. From the salivary gland and intestines of these small ectoparasites, germs can get into the wound and infect you with a serious disease.

The best known virus-induced disease is meningitis (tick-borne encephalitis virus, TBEV).

**Lyme disease (Borreliosis)**

Another well known type of bacterial driven infection is Lyme disease, a disease with multiple and often camouflaged symptoms like pain in the joints, muscles, nerves, heart and skin or fatigue.

Therefore, if you get stung by a tick, you should ensure yourself about your personal risk without delay. Unfortunately, in some cases symptoms only appear after years, so that you will not associate them with the original tick stung anymore.
Antibody testing
By detection of antibodies in the blood you can find out if your immune system is currently fighting against TBE virus or Lyme disease bacterial infection. However, such antibodies first start to form only after two to three weeks and can remain lifelong detectable, even if no active germ is left.

The earlier, the better
After being stung by an infected tick, the following steps for a therapy can be taken – The earlier, the better: Some doctors immediately advise their patients to take antibiotics preventively – even if it is unclear if an infection has taken place. Unnecessary prescription of antibiotics can be a problem by causing resistance against this drug over time. A true medical progress is a detection of the germ in a living or dead tick. For this testing the tick needs to be removed carefully, preferably using a device like tick sling or a tick remover card (available from pharmacies or at www.zeckenhabor.de). A tick lasso sling looks like a ball pen; you release the sling by pushing the button, then loop the sling around the animal’s neck and hereby remove the parasite easy and safe. For analysis, the tick can be taped to a piece of paper (or the downloaded PDF form) and sent to our specialized tick laboratory.

Lyme disease or TBEV?
Using a special procedure (PCR – polymerase chain reaction), our laboratory can even detect minimum quantities of many possible germs within just a few hours by genetically identifying the nucleic acids Lyme disease bacteria, TBEV, or even rarer pathogens (e.g. Ehrlichia, Babesia, and Rickettsia).

With this particular information, your doctor can then decide if and which therapy should be applied. Tick PCR represents a personalized health measure (called IGEL in German health care). The costs are approximately €35 for Lyme disease infection and €50 for TBEV infection tests (incl. VAT).