

Ticks at School

Guidance for the School Nurse

Ticks bite and some species are vectors of human disease, including Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. The risk of tick-borne disease can be reduced through the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)—smart, sensible practices that include landscape management, personal protection, and education.

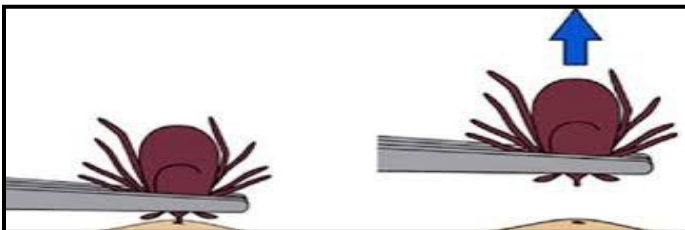
Ticks on School Grounds

Ticks are of concern on school grounds, especially species that vector diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, and Powassan encephalitis. Ticks can be found on playgrounds, sports fields, trails, and school yards located in and adjacent to wooded areas, especially where deer and other wildlife hosts are abundant.

The School Nurse's Role

School nurses can play a key role in preventing tick-borne illness by advocating for integrated pest management (IPM) policies and practices—sensible, evidence-based methods to reduce tick encounters and prevent bites. The school nurse can educate students, staff and families how to avoid ticks and when to seek medical treatment for tick-borne illness. Nurses can also play a key role in tick surveillance by reporting where, when, and what kinds of ticks are found on students. If a tick is found attached to the skin:

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull gently until the tick detaches. If using a tick 'spoon', slide it forward to frame the tick in small part of the V-shaped slot, then use continuous sliding motion until the tick detaches. Do not twist or jerk the tick—this may increase the risk of disease transmission. If mouthparts break off and remain in the skin; disease transmission cannot occur after the rest of the tick is removed and the mouthparts will fall out as the skin heals.



- After removing the tick, clean your hands and the bite area with soap and water. You may also apply an antiseptic to the bite.

- Place tick in a zipper-lock bag. Use reference images or contact your local extension office to identify it.

Integrated Pest Management

- Reduce tick habitat by mowing lawns, clearing tall grasses and brush around playgrounds and at the edge of lawns, removing leaf litter from trails, and pruning trees and shrubs to reduce shade.
- A 3-ft wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas may discourage tick migration into lawn and reminds people not to enter tick habitat.
- Move playground equipment away from wooded areas.
- Discourage rodents by sealing gaps in and under buildings, sheds, dugouts and other structures. Eliminate bird feeders, refuse piles and stacks of stored equipment to discourage birds and rodents that can carry ticks and diseases.

Promote Personal Protection

- Avoid wooded or brushy areas, tall grass, and leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails. Keep children within designated playground areas.
- Use repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin. For additional repellent information visit: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>
- Consider wearing permethrin-treated clothing if going into heavily tick-infested areas.
- Use a buddy system to tick check without physical contact after recess or outdoor activity.
- Perform a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas.



Monitoring for Ticks

Monitoring is the key to identifying which species of ticks are present, how many, which life stages, and where they are found. This information is critical to managing ticks and reducing health risk to people. The most effective and cost efficient method is tick dragging. To make a tick drag attach a 3 ft x 3 ft square of light-colored cloth to a wooden dowel; heavy flannel or corduroy are particularly effective. Tie a loop of twine to the dowel for a handle. Pull the tick drag over the ground and low vegetation to collect ticks. Ticks will cling to the cloth, allowing you to collect, count and identify them. Keep detailed records to document the date, location, and number of ticks of each species collected. Use this information to assess risk, place signage or fencing to minimize human encounters with ticks, target landscape modifications or pesticide applications and measure the effectiveness of control actions taken.

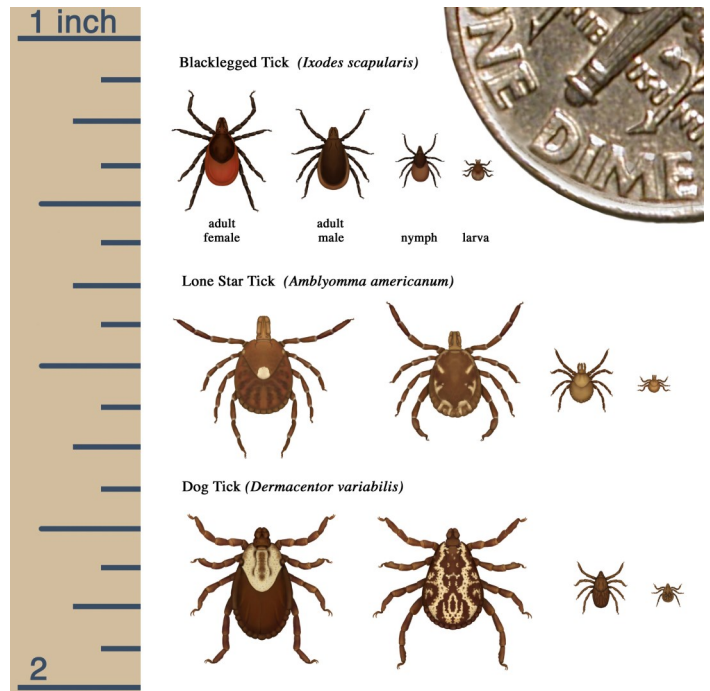


Image: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Tick Monitoring and Response Action Chart

