



# Public Health School Health and Safety

May 2025

## Reducing tick exposures on school properties

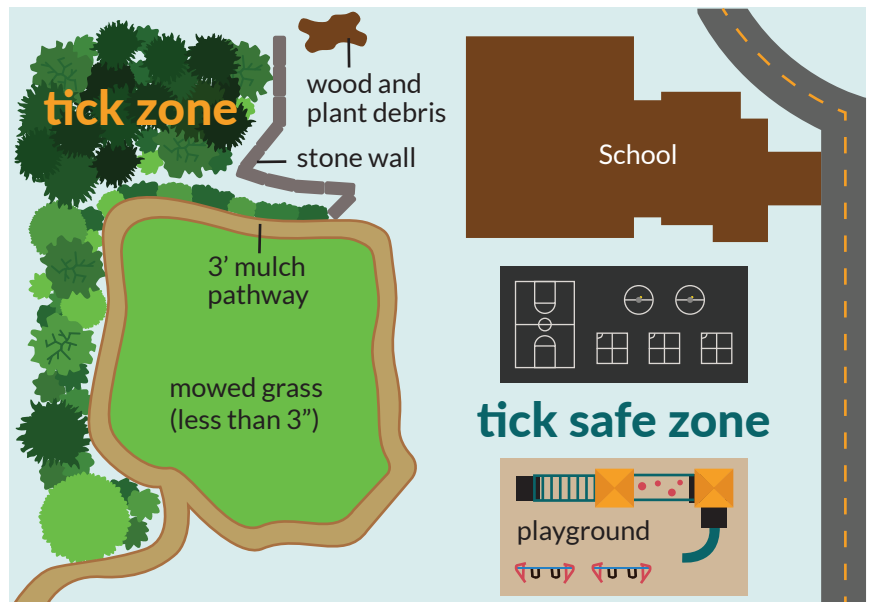
Ticks live in grassy, brushy or wooded areas and can grab onto animals and people as they walk through these areas.

On school properties, ticks are most often found on playgrounds, athletic fields, cross-country trails, paths, and school yards located in and near wooded areas.

You can encounter ticks year-round, but they are most active in **spring and summer** months.

**The following landscape practices can help to reduce the risk of exposure to ticks:**

- Remove leaf litter, plant debris and brush around buildings, edges of lawns, playgrounds and ball fields.
- Keep grass mowed (less than 3") on all school grounds, including sports fields.
- Locate playground areas away from woodland edges.
- Create a 9-foot buffer zone between vegetation and all grounds used for school activities.
- Clear ground cover and vegetation around stonewalls and wood piles.
- Trim tree branches and shrubs around the lawn edge to reduce shade.
- Clear and widen woodland trails.
- Adopt hardscape and xeriscape landscaping techniques with gravel pathways and mulches. Create a 3-foot or wider wood chip, mulch or gravel pathway to serve as a barrier between woods and lawns.
- Keep paths frequented by students (e.g., short cuts to their homes) clear from vegetation to a width of at least one sidewalk (54 inches).



## Integrated pest management

Integrated pest management (IPM) is the most effective way to manage pests on school campuses. Follow state guidance and the school's or district's IMP policy when working to reduce the number of ticks on campus. IPM can result in the least toxic pest control options with the least possible effect on children.



If using pesticide, first identify rules and regulations related to pesticide application on school grounds. Restrict the application of pesticides to high-risk tick habitat, such as edges of lawn and woodlands. Spraying open fields and lawns is not necessary.

## School maintenance workers and groundskeepers

School workers can take steps to protect themselves from exposure to ticks:

- When possible, avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. Walk in the center of trails.
- When in tick habitats, wear light-colored, tightly woven long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck your pant legs into socks or boots, and your shirt into your pants.
- Treat clothing and boots with products containing 0.5% permethrin.
- Check your body for ticks. Inspect areas in and around the hair, head, neck, ears, under arms, inside the belly button, around the waist, between the legs, and behind the knees.
- For information about repellents, visit the US Environmental Protection Agency website: [www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you](http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you)

