

How teachers and coaches can help prevent Lyme disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread by the bite of a black-legged tick. It often causes a rash and mild flulike symptoms. Adults responsible for children during outside activities should know what to do if a child has a tick. Prompt attention can help prevent Lyme disease.

Why is it important to prevent Lyme disease in children?

Lyme disease can become serious if not treated early. Children ages 5 to 14 years are at greatest risk for Lyme disease because they spend a lot of time outdoors.

How can you help prevent Lyme disease in children?

When watching children at recess or coaching them outdoors, encourage them to

Stay away from moist, shady places where ticks are most prevalent, for example:

- wooded areas (in or at the edge)
- tall grasses
- shrubs and brush
- leaf piles
- wood piles
- stone walls

Play in:

- sunny spots
- centers of playgrounds and playing fields.

Coaches can also encourage parents to have students use insect repellent before practices and games, and to do tick checks when they get home.

What to do if a student or player has a tick

If a student or player has a tick on them, it's important to remove it as quickly as possible. The longer a tick is attached, the more time it has to transmit Lyme disease and associated infections. If a student has a tick on them during school, they should go to the school nurse for help removing it.



During afterschool activities or sports, the adults in charge should have a “tick kit” on hand that includes: a pair of tweezers, antiseptic wipes, and small zippered plastic bags.

If a parent or guardian is available, have them remove the tick. If not, the coach or other adult in charge should remove the tick (see steps below) and inform the child’s parents, give them the tick in the bag, and encourage the parents to call the child’s doctor.

To remove a tick, follow these steps:

1. Using tweezers, grab the tick as close to the skin as possible.
2. Keeping the tweezers firmly grasped, slowly pull the tick straight up and out to avoid breaking the tick and leaving part of it in the child’s body. Do not twist. Also, try not to squeeze, crush, or puncture the tick, since its bodily fluids may contain infection-causing pathogens.
3. Using the tweezers (not your hands), place the tick inside a zippered plastic bag.
4. Disinfect the bite site with soap and water, or with alcohol or an antiseptic wipe.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water.