Several kinds of diseases are transmitted to humans by ticks in Kansas. Some of them may be deadly if not diagnosed and treated in time. Tick-borne human diseases that may be contracted in Kansas include Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, tularemia, relapsing fever, and ehrlichiosis. Even a tick carrying no microbial pathogens may, especially if attached along the spine, cause paralysis.

The following precautions are applicable throughout tick season, which is usually considered to be April through September. However, ticks of several species are active on warm days in February and March, and in October and early November. Adults of the blacklegged tick, an efficient vector of Lyme disease present in wooded areas of eastern Kansas, often bite people and pets during October through December.

1. Provide children with play areas on frequently mowed lawn away from tall grass and shrubbery.
2. Avoid tall grass and brushy or wooded areas as much as possible.
3. In tick habitat, wear long pants with cuffs tucked into socks; tape sock tops over pantlegs for better protection, then twist the tape and make one wrap with the sticky side out to trap ticks.
4. Light-colored clothing and hiking in pairs help you see and intercept ticks on clothing before they find skin.
5. Repellents are helpful. Apply to sock tops and pantlegs or, additionally as the label allows. Many common repellents contain diethylmetatoluamide (or Deet). These are effective for only a few hours.

Coulston's Duranon Tick Repellent (0.5% permethrin), applied to clothing as directed on the label, provides repellency for many days.

6. Check clothing for ticks before entering the home. Do not bring camping gear or sports equipment into the home until you know that no ticks are on it or in it.
7. As soon as practical after activity in tick-infested areas, undress and search your clothing again for ticks. Then check your body. Feel very carefully or have someone look on your scalp, back, and other body sites which you can't see. Search closely—immature ticks (larvae and nymphs) may be mistaken for freckles or scabs.
8. Flea and tick collars for pets, or occasional dip baths to destroy ticks, are helpful. However, these practices seldom eliminate all ticks. So, regardless of whether or not you apply such measures, also hand-search your pets daily and destroy all ticks you find. This protects your pets and reduces the number of ticks close to home in the next generation of ticks.
9. To remove an embedded tick, place fine-tipped tweezers close to the skin and grasp its "head", then pull gently and patiently, directly away from the skin surface—never sideways, and do not twist.
10. Disinfect the bite site.
11. Save the tick(s) in alcohol with the date and the victim's name on the container for future reference. Do not put ticks from different people or from different occasions into the same container.
12. Be especially watchful for the first 10 to 14 days after a tick bite. If signs of illness such as flu-like symptoms, headache, fever, lack of balance, skin rashes, muscle or joint pain, or nausea develop, see a physician. Take the tick(s) you saved to your County Extension Office to be sent to the K.S.U. Insect Diagnostic Laboratory for species identification. Or, you can send ticks to the following out-of-state laboratories to be examined for Lyme disease spirochetes only.

Tick Lab
CBR Laboratories
800 Huntington Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Tick Project
Lyme Borreliosis Association
Connecticut Ag. Experiment Station
123 Huntington Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06504

For diagnosis of other pathogens, ask your doctor to refer you to the appropriate laboratory.