

Fact Sheet: Mosquito Repellents

Insect repellent is a spray or liquid used to keep biting insects, such as mosquitoes, away from your skin and clothing. Repellents work by preventing insects from landing on and biting your skin. Insect repellent should be used when you are outdoors to protect against insect bites and the illnesses they can carry, including West Nile virus. To protect against mosquito bites, use insect repellents containing the ingredient DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.

Guidelines for using repellents with DEET

- **Infants less than six months of age.**

Do not use any repellents that contain DEET.

Infants should be protected with mosquito netting tucked over baby carriers.

- **Children 6 months to 2 years of age.**

Use an insect repellent with 10 percent or less DEET.

The repellent should be applied sparingly and not be applied to the face and hands.

Prolonged use should be avoided.

The protection will last about 2-3 hours.

- **Children 2 to 12 years of age.**

Use an insect repellent with 10 percent or less DEET.

Do not apply more than three times per day.

Do not apply to the face and hands.

Prolonged use should be avoided.

The protection will last about 2-3 hours.

- **Adults and children older than 12 years**

Use an insect repellent containing 30 percent or less DEET.

If you are sweating or working in floodwater, the protection will need to be re-applied frequently.

Proper use of insect repellents

Choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that you will be outdoors. Always read the entire label carefully and follow all of the instructions for use. Adults should apply repellent to children. Avoid applying repellent to children's hands to reduce the chance of getting the repellent in their eyes and mouths. Apply the repellent only on exposed skin surfaces or on top of clothing. Do not use under clothing.

Do not use aerosol or pump sprays directly on the face. Spray your hands and then rub the product over the face. Try to avoid getting it around your mouth or in your eyes. If you do get repellent in your eyes, flush well with water.

Do not use the repellent on open wounds, cuts, or if your skin is irritated or sunburned. Avoid breathing in spray mists and never apply sprays inside a tent. Use only in well-ventilated areas. Do not use sprays or aerosol products near food.

Wash treated skin with soap and water when you return indoors or when protection is no longer needed. Washing the repellent from the skin surface is important when a repellent is likely to be applied for several days in a row. If clothing is treated, it should be washed before being worn again.

When using sunscreen, apply it first, wait thirty minutes, and then apply the DEET repellent. If you suspect a reaction to the insect repellent, stop using it and wash the treated skin.

Non-DEET repellents

Effective insect repellents that contain active ingredients other than DEET include repellants with lemon eucalyptus oil and picaridin. These products are as effective as DEET, but protect against mosquitoes for a shorter time. Lemon-eucalyptus oil should not be used on children less than three years old, and it should not be applied more than twice a day.

To learn more about mosquito repellants, go to the Mississippi Department of Health website at www.HealthyMS.com. You may also call the 24-7 information hotline at 1-866-HLTHY 4 U or 1-866-458-4948.