

The 'Bug' Season is here!

These tips from the CDC, EPA, and Cooperative Extension are designed to help take the bite out the bug season.

MOSQUITO CONTROL

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution for managing mosquitoes. Countless products on the market claim to be effective and easy to use but few have appreciable value in lessening the annoyance and incidence of bites. Unlike most insects found around homes, mosquitoes are pervasive outdoor pests and there are limits to what can be done to minimize their abundance. Nonetheless, there are measures that can afford some relief.

Breeding Site Reduction

The most effective way to reduce the number of mosquitoes around homes and neighborhoods is to find and eliminate their breeding sites - standing water. Adults of some mosquito species remain near their breeding site. Others can travel long distances, even up to several miles. Because of this, problem mosquitoes may come from breeding sites some distance away.

Regardless of recent weather patterns - wet, dry, warm, or cool - there are plenty of potential places in which mosquitoes can develop. A neglected bird bath, swimming pool, or clogged rain gutter can produce hundreds of new mosquitoes in a just a few days. Trees uprooted by storms leave soil depressions that collect seepage and rainwater. Large areas of standing water, such as from swamps, sluggishly moving streams or ditches may require efforts beyond those of individual property owners. However, there are effective steps that individuals can take to minimize mosquito breeding on their property,

1. Dispose of old tires, buckets, aluminum cans, plastic sheeting or other refuse that can hold water. Empty accumulated water from trash cans, boats, wheel barrows, pet dishes, and flower pot bottoms. If possible, turn these items over when they are not in use.
2. Clean debris from rain gutters and unclog obstructed downspouts. Clogged rain gutters are one of the most overlooked breeding sites for mosquitoes around homes. Remove any standing water on flat roofs or around structures. Repair leaking faucets and air conditioners that produce puddles for several days.
3. Change water in bird baths and wading pools at least once a week and keep swimming pools cleaned and chlorinated. Ornamental pools can be aerated or stocked with mosquito-eating fish. Aeration / water movement helps because mosquitoes prefer quiet, non-flowing water for egg-laying and development.
4. Fill or drain ditches and swampy areas, and other soil depressions and remove, drain, or fill tree holes and stumps with mortar or sealant to prevent accumulation of water. Eliminate standing water and seepage around animal watering troughs, cisterns, and septic tanks. Be sure that cistern screens are intact and that access covers fit tightly.
5. Irrigate lawns and gardens carefully to prevent water from standing for several days.

Using Insect Repellents Safely

EPA recommends the following precautions when using insect repellents:

- Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label). Do not use under clothing.
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to eyes and mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using sprays do not spray directly onto face; spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Do not allow children to handle the products, and do not apply to children's hands. When using on children, apply to your own hands and then put it on the child.

- Do not spray in enclosed areas. Avoid breathing a repellent spray, and do not use it near food.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing. Heavy application and saturation is generally unnecessary for effectiveness; if biting insects do not respond to a thin film of repellent, then apply a bit more.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water or bathe. This is particularly important when repellents are used repeatedly in a day or on consecutive days. Also, wash treated clothing before wearing it again. If you suspect that you or your child are reacting to an insect repellent, discontinue use, wash treated skin, and then call your local poison control center. If/when you go to a doctor, take the repellent with you.

A wide variety of insect repellent products are available. CDC recommends the use of products containing active ingredients which have been registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use as repellents applied to skin and clothing. EPA registration of repellent active ingredients indicates the materials have been reviewed and approved for efficacy and human safety when applied according to the instructions on the label.

Of the active ingredients registered with the EPA, two have demonstrated a higher degree of efficacy in the peer-reviewed, scientific literature *. Products containing these active ingredients typically **provide longer-lasting protection than others:**

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide)
- Picaridin (KBR 3023)

Oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-menthane 3,8-diol (PMD)], a plant based repellent, is also registered with EPA. In two recent scientific publications, when oil of lemon eucalyptus was tested against mosquitoes found in the US it provided protection similar to repellents with low concentrations of DEET.

Avoiding Ticks and Lyme Disease

Lyme disease has become the leading tick-borne illness in the United States. In 1999, 16,273 cases of Lyme disease were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The deer tick, also known as the black-legged tick, is the species that most often transmits Lyme disease. With proper precautions, Lyme disease is preventable.

- Ticks are most active from April through October, so exercise additional caution when venturing into tick country during that time period.
- When in a tick-infested area, an insect repellent is good prevention is, however, consider using a product designed to be applied to clothing rather than skin.
- Tuck pants cuffs into boots or socks, and wear long sleeves and light-colored clothing to make it easier to spot ticks.
- Stay to the center of hiking paths, and avoid grassy and marshy woodland areas.
- Inspect yourself and your children for clinging ticks after leaving an infested area. Ticks are hard to see - nymphs are dot sized; adults, smaller than a sesame seed.
- If you discover a tick feeding, do not panic. Studies indicate that an infected tick does not usually transmit the Lyme organism during the first 24 hours.
- If you suspect Lyme disease or its symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.

Tick Removal Procedure:

1. Avoid handling ticks with uncovered fingers; use tweezers or commercial tools designed for removal. If index finger and thumb must be used, protect them with rubber gloves, plastic or even a paper towel.
2. Place the tips of tweezers or edges of other removal devices around the area where the mouthparts enter the skin.
3. With steady slow motion, pull the tick away from the skin or slide the removal device along the skin (read the directions for each commercial tool). Do not jerk, crush, squeeze or puncture the tick.
4. After removal, place the tick directly into a sealable container. Disinfect the area around the bite site using standard procedures.