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Event Highlight

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Tips

How to Safely Use Bug Repellent

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Wear protective clothing. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors. Spray the clothing with repellent containing DEET or, to a lesser extent, permethrin, since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing.

Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. The most effective repellents contain a chemical called DEET. Adults don't need more than 30-35% strength; higher concentrations provide no additional protection and should be reserved for times when exposure to insects is very high, or high humidity or temperatures may promote rapid evaporation of repellent from skin. Small children and infants should not use full-strength insect repellent containing DEET (use 10% strength instead, or consult with a pediatrician). DEET has been found to be safe for pregnant women. Always read the instructions before using any insect repellent.

When applying repellent:

- Use a light touch. Do not cover skin/clothes heavily.
- Do not put repellent on skin already protected by clothing.
- Don't spray repellent directly onto your face. Put some on your hands then apply thin layer to face.
- Avoid the mouth and eyes. Repellent can irritate these areas. Also, don't put repellent on your children's hands (as these often end up in little mouths and eyes).
- Be sure to wipe your palms of any excess repellent to prevent accidental contact with eyes, mouths, and genitals.
- Keep repellent off skin that isn't healthy. Keep away from wounds, cuts, irritated skin, or skin with eczema or psoriasis.
- Avoid inhaling aerosolized repellents.
- Apply carefully. DEET-containing repellents can damage plastics (including eyeglass frames), rayon, spandex, other synthetic fabrics, leather, and painted or varnished surfaces.
- Insect repellent containing DEET will work for about 10 hours, so there is no need to reapply frequently. Once you go inside, rinse it off with soap and water.

Family

Insect repellent also can be effectively applied to window screens, mesh insect nets, tents -- even sleeping bags.

Other Mosquito Repellents:

Permethrin, originally derived from the crushed and dried flower of the daisy, is also effective, but instead of repelling insects, it kills them (it is an insecticide). It should be applied to clothing and not directly to skin. While outdoors, spray each side of the fabric to moisten it, about 30-45 seconds. Allow the garment to dry for 2-4 hours before wearing it.

Skin-So-Soft, made by Avon, has been shown to repel mosquitoes, although it does not last nearly as long as repellents containing DEET.

The same holds true for **plant-derived repellents**, such as those containing essential oils from: citronella, cedar, verbena, pennyroyal, geranium, lavender, pine, cajeput, cinnamon, rosemary, basil, thyme, allspice, garlic, and peppermint. The only exception is **Bite Blocker**, a natural repellent made from soybean oil, geranium oil, and coconut oil, which has been shown to prevent mosquito bites just as well, and for just as long, as DEET.

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