

The MIGHTY MOSQUITO!



Mosquitoes can ruin your outdoor party, make working in your garden a trial, and keep you awake for hours. It's amazing how their tiny buzzing is amplified when lying in a darkened room!

Discourage mosquito bites

Whether you're hitting the hiking trail, picnicking in the backyard, or camping in the great outdoors, you'll want to protect against mosquito bites.

Most people won't get sick from a mosquito bite – it's just annoying. But the elderly, children, and those with weakened immune systems are at increased risk. Occasionally, mosquitoes carry diseases, such as West Nile virus and malaria. In North America, West Nile virus was first discovered in New York City in 1999. It quickly spread across the U.S. and Canada and is now found nationwide. Malaria typically occurs in warmer regions – mostly outside of the U.S.

Mosquitoes are more likely to bite people who are hot or sweating – although anyone is a potential meal. Use these tips for reducing mosquitoes around your home and keeping yourself protected from mosquito bites:

- **Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks, and close-toed shoes.** Wear a hat and head net if venturing into forests or marshy areas.
- **Spray your clothing with repellents** containing permethrin, DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus because mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to exposed skin. If you spray your clothing, there is no need to spray repellent containing DEET to the skin under your clothing. For more details on pesticides and their application go to the National Pesticide Information Center.
- **Limit outdoor activity at dawn and dusk,** or anytime in the evening when mosquito activity is highest.
- After returning indoors, **wash treated skin with soap and water.**

- Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide in your breath and the nitrogen waste your body sheds through perspiration. **If you're sweating, reapply repellent frequently,** especially to the back of your neck and ankles. Also reapply repellent after swimming or as directed on product.

- After a rainstorm, **eliminate the standing water** that has collected on your property in places such as pool covers, old tires, buckets, flowerpots, plastic weed barriers, toys, and birdbaths. In fact, plant flowers in your birdbath this year.

Find out how to report dead birds in your area: npic.orst.edu/



- **Place mosquito netting over infant carriers** when you are outdoors with infants.
- **Clean and chlorinate swimming pools** and outdoor hot tubs and saunas. If they are not in use, empty them and keep them covered.
- **Stock fish ponds with mosquitofish** (*Gambusia affinis*), which eat the larvae.
- **Remove excess vegetation** around ponds and yards; mosquitoes like to lay their eggs in algae at the edge of the pond, and adult mosquitoes like to rest in dense shrubbery.
- **Use dunks** (doughnut-shaped pellets) or *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *israelensis* (BTI) to kill mosquito larvae in larger ponds. Both are non-toxic to animals.
- **Citronella**, which is frequently used in outdoor candles, is a good deterrent against mosquitoes, but it doesn't provide long-term protection.
- **Install screens** on open windows and repair holes in screen doors.



- **Replace outdoor lights with yellow "bug lights."** While they are not repellents, they do attract fewer mosquitoes and other bugs than ordinary lights do.

Around your neighborhood

Mosquito breeding sites can be anywhere. Consider organizing a neighborhood clean-up day when volunteers from a church or civic group would pick up containers from vacant lots and parks, and to encourage people to keep their yards free of standing water. Mosquitoes don't care about fences, so it's important to control breeding sites throughout the neighborhood.

While you're cleaning, keep alert for dead birds. They may be a sign that West Nile virus is circulating between birds and the mosquitoes in an area. More than 200 species of birds are known to have been infected with West Nile virus, though not all infected birds will die. By reporting dead birds to state and local health departments, you can play an important role in monitoring West Nile virus.

Zzzzztttt! You've been bitten!

Instead of scratching (which increases the risk of infection), apply hydrocortisone cream, calamine lotion, baking soda paste, or diluted ammonia to the bite several times a day until your symptoms subside.

If the itch is simply driving you crazy, you might be having an allergic reaction. Try an over-the-counter antihistamine.

Contact your doctor if, after being bitten, you experience fever, headache, body aches, light sensitivity, pain behind the eyes, or nausea and vomiting.



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2008.; U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2008.; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2008.; Modotahedi BS, et al. Mosquito Bite Therapy: Evidenced-Based. *Exogenous Dermatology*. 2004;3:332-338.

