

Mosquitoes are still lurking – Protect yourself this fall

Even though summer is waning, the risk of mosquito bites is still high. We have had a particularly hot and humid summer, which creates an excellent breeding environment for mosquitoes. Besides being uncomfortable, mosquito bites can lead to diseases such as Zika and West Nile virus. Read on to learn how to best protect yourself.

What works – bug repellent: Wearing bug repellent is one of the best ways to avoid mosquito bites. There are a myriad of insect repellent products on the market. Some ingredients work better than others. The following are approved by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for mosquito (and also in some cases, tick) protection:

- DEET: DEET is one of the most common and effective insect repellents. It is also safe for adults and children older than two months.
- Picaridin: This compound is designed to be used on clothing. Do not use directly on your skin.
- Permethrin: This repellent, derived from the pepper plant is an excellent DEET alternative.
- IR3535
- 2-Undecanone

In general, always use [EPA registered repellents](#). Look for the EPA registration number on the back label.

Wear it right: For the most part insect repellent is very safe. But it is important to not overexpose yourself. Follow these tips:

- The correct way to use repellent is to apply it after sunscreen. Sunscreen works on the deeper layers of skin, while bug repellent works on the top layer.
- Do not apply to open wounds or cuts.
- Do not spray it on your face: apply carefully, avoiding your mouth and eyes. Use sparingly on your ears.
- Be sure to wash your hands before eating, and shower or bathe at the end of the day

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What doesn't work: Although popular, these methods do not effectively repel mosquitos:

- Bug zappers
- Eating garlic
- Citronella candles or coils
- Ultrasonic devices
- DEET wristbands: DEET works by repelling mosquitos when they land on your skin. They will still land on you, but they will not bite. Mosquitoes are not repelled by sensing DEET in the air.

Other things you can do to reduce mosquito bites:

- Get rid of standing water. Mosquitos can breed in very small amounts of water, such as the water that accumulates in saucers under plants.
- Avoid the outdoors when mosquitos are most prevalent: Mosquitos are most active at dawn and dusk.
- Plant bug repelling herbs in outdoor areas where you hang out. Examples include lavender, mint, catnip, lemon balm, thyme, and especially basil.
- Wear clothes made of tightly woven cloth.
- Tuck and button. Close openings in your clothes. Tuck socks into pants. Button sleeves and collars.
- Don't wear perfume outdoors. If you feel that you must wear fragrance, choose one that is not flowery (mosquitos feed on nectar).
- Use fans: Mosquitos are not good flyers. Using a fan at floor or table height will help keep them away.

Learn more from these sources:

- [Consumer Reports](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control features](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control fact sheet](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [National Pesticide Information Center](#)