

Insect Repellants

Not only are mosquitoes a nuisance, but they can also carry viruses such as West Nile Virus. In some countries, they are responsible for the spread of malaria. For the most part, however, the bites are merely a nuisance in the United States.

There are two main ways to avoid mosquito bites. The first way is to eliminate mosquitoes living and breeding areas altogether. The mosquito larvae require stagnant/standing water to mature. If you can eliminate stagnant water from birdbaths, buckets, pots, and other sources around your home, you will greatly reduce the mosquito population.

The other way to avoid getting bitten is to use mosquito repellent, especially around dusk. Mosquitoes are attracted to human skin. Female mosquitoes use the protein from human blood to nourish their eggs. The repellent blocks the mosquitoes' attraction to skin. Three products on the market have been proven effective: DEET, picaridin, and oil of lemon eucalyptus. Read the label to find the best concentration for your needs.

Resources* (accessed 9/23/05):

Guidelines for DEET Insect Repellent Use, fact sheet for the general public by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/toolkit/DEET.pdf>

DEET Alternatives Considered to be Effective Mosquito Repellents, AAP News, June 2005, from the American Academy of Pediatrics
<http://www.aap.org/family/wnv-jun05.htm>

Mosquitoes: How to Control Them, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/mosquito.htm> - this website has been replaced by the following:
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes/mosquito.htm>

* If the addresses listed above are no longer valid, try searching the internet by the title of the document and/or author.