

West Nile Virus



Mosquito Bite Protection

Mosquito bites always cause discomfort; sometimes they cause infections, such as West Nile virus.

Mosquitoes become infected with the virus when they feed on birds that are infected with West Nile. The virus is passed to humans and animals from the bite of an **infected mosquito**.

Use these safety tips to lower the risk of illness due to mosquito bites:

- Mosquitoes can bite any time of day. However, the peak hours of mosquito biting activity are usually at dawn and dusk.
- If possible, avoid high mosquito population areas, including wooded areas and wetlands.
- Wear light-coloured clothing, including long-sleeves, pants, socks and shoes.
- Install or repair window and door screens so mosquitoes cannot get indoors.
- Apply an insect repellent with DEET (sparingly) to clothing and exposed skin areas.
- Follow the advice of Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society in the table below.

Age	Applications/Day	DEET Concentration	Comments
Under 6 months	0	0	DEET should not be used on infants under 6 months
6 months to 2 years	1	10% or less	Apply only if there is a high risk for infection
2 to 12 years	3 maximum	10% or less	Avoid face and hands
Over 12 years	As required	30% or less	Avoid eyes and mouth

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Information on Insect Repellents

DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) is the best and most-studied insect repellent. There are non-DEET repellents available but they do not provide long-lasting, reliable protection where mosquito-borne diseases are a major threat.

Repellents that contain 30% DEET will provide adults with enough protection for approximately 6 hours. Products with lower amounts of DEET are just as good but do not last as long.

Choose a repellent that gives protection for the amount of time that you will be outdoors. Some products are not recommended for use on children.

Insect Repellent Health Precautions

- Apply repellent sparingly, and only on exposed skin surfaces or on top of clothing. Do not use under clothing.
- Avoid breathing spray mists and never apply sprays inside a tent. Use only in well-ventilated areas. Do not use near food.
- Do not inhale, ingest or get into the eye.
- Do not apply to a child's hands. They are likely to touch the eyes or mouth.
- Never use on wounds or irritated skin.
- Wash treated skin and clothing after coming indoors.
- Pregnant and nursing women should reduce use.
- If using sunscreen, apply the sunscreen first to allow it to bind to the skin.

Non-DEET Alternatives

Active Ingredient	Protection Time	Comments
P-menthane 3,8-diol (Lemon eucalyptus plant)	Up to 2 hours	Do not use on children under 3 years Can be applied 2 times per day
Soybean Oil	1-3.5 hours	Follow label directions
Citronella	30 minutes – 2 hours	Do not use on children under 2 years
Lavender	30 minutes	Do not use on children under 2 years

Source: Health Canada
<http://www.ppra-arla.gc.ca>