

# Insect Repellent Fact Sheet



## Why You Should Use Mosquito Repellent

Insect repellent helps reduce your exposure to mosquito bites that may carry West Nile virus or other diseases, and allows you to continue to play, work, and enjoy the outdoors with a lower risk of disease.

## General Considerations for Using Repellents Safely

- Always follow the instructions on the product label.
- Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label.) Do not use repellents under clothing.
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using sprays, do not spray directly on face—spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Do not allow children to handle the product. When using on children, apply to your own hands first and then put it on the child. You may not want to apply to children's hands.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing. Heavy application and saturation are generally unnecessary for effectiveness. If biting insects do not respond to a thin film of repellent, then apply a bit more.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water or bathe. This is particularly important when repellents are used repeatedly in a day or on consecutive days. Also, wash treated clothing before wearing it again. (This precaution may vary with different repellents—check the product label.)
- If you or your child get a rash or other bad reaction from an insect repellent, stop using the repellent, wash the repellent off with mild soap and water, and call a local poison control center for further guidance. If you go to a doctor because of the repellent, take the repellent with you to show the doctor.

**\*Note** that the label for products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus specifies that they should not to be used on children under the age of three years.

## When You Should Use Mosquito Repellent

**Use repellent when you go outdoors.** You should use repellent even if you're only going outside for a few minutes—it only takes one bite to get West Nile virus. Many of the mosquitoes that carry the West Nile virus bite between dusk and dawn. If you're outside during these hours pay special attention to using repellent.

## Which Mosquito Repellents Work Best

A wide variety of insect repellent products are available. CDC recommends the use of products containing active ingredients which have been registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use as repellents applied to skin and clothing.

In addition to wearing repellent, you can protect yourself and your family by taking these precautions:

- Wear clothing with long pants and long sleeves while outdoors. Apply permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent to clothing, as mosquitoes may bite through thin fabric. (Remember: don't use permethrin on skin.)
- Use mosquito netting over infant carriers.
- Reduce the number of mosquitoes in your area by getting rid of containers with standing water that provide breeding places for the mosquitoes.

## How Often You Should Re-apply Repellents

**Follow the directions on the product you are using.** Sweating or getting wet may mean that you need to re-apply more frequently. Use your common sense. Re-apply repellent if you start to get bitten and follow the label instructions. ***Remember—if you're getting bitten, do something about it!***

## For more information on repellents:

-The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC): 1-800-858-7378 or <http://npic.orst.edu/>.

-The Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes/insectrp.htm> for additional information on using EPA-registered repellents.

-Regarding the use of repellent on children, please see [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

\*This information in this fact sheet is provided by the Center for Disease Control.