

Helpful Facts About DEET

From Dusk to Dawn Put Your DEET on!

Q. Why should I use mosquito repellent?

A. Mosquito repellents help people reduce their exposure to mosquito bites that may carry potentially serious viruses such as West Nile virus.

Q. What's DEET and how does mosquito repellent work?

A. Mosquitoes are attracted to people by skin odors and carbon dioxide from breath. Many repellents contain a chemical, N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide (DEET), which repels the mosquito, making the person unattractive for feeding. DEET does not kill mosquitoes; it just makes them unable to locate us.

Q. Is DEET safe?

A. Yes, products containing DEET are very safe when used according to the directions. Because DEET is so widely used, a great deal of testing has been done. DEET is registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Over the long history of DEET usage, very few confirmed incidents of toxic reactions have occurred when the product is used properly.

Q. How much DEET should I use?

A. Use mosquito repellent with up to 35% DEET for adults and up to 10% DEET for children 2 months to 12 years.

Q. How should products containing DEET be used on children?

A. When using mosquito repellent on a child, put it on your own hands first and then rub it on your child's face or use mosquito repellent wipes.

- Avoid children's eyes and mouth and only use a little around their ears.
- Do not put repellent on children's hands (children often put their hands in their mouths)
- Do not allow young children to apply to themselves
- Keep DEET out of the reach of children
- If repellent is applied to clothing, wash clothing before wearing again

Q. How often should repellent be reapplied?

A. Follow the directions on the product you are using in order to determine how often you need to reapply repellent. Sweating, perspiration or getting wet may mean that you need to reapply repellent more often. If you are not being bitten, it is not necessary to reapply repellent. Repellents containing a higher concentration of DEET (up to 35%) provide longer-lasting protection.

Q. How should I safely use products containing DEET?

A. Always follow the recommendations appearing on the product label.

- Use enough repellent to cover exposed skin or clothing.
- Don't apply to skin that is under clothing.

- Do not apply to cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Do not spray aerosol or pump products in enclosed areas.
- Do not spray directly on your face. Spray your hands and then rub them carefully over the face, avoiding eyes and mouth. Consider using mosquito repellent wipes on and around the face.
- Wear long sleeves and pants for added protection,
- Apply products with DEET to clothing, as mosquitoes may bite through thin fabric. It is not necessary to apply mosquito repellent to skin under tight or thick fabric.
- Mosquito netting can be used over infant carriers.

Q. Can I use mosquito repellent containing DEET and sunscreen at the same time?

A. Yes. However, the mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are known to bite between dusk and dawn – when the sun is going down or just coming up.

Q. Should I use a combination sunscreen/DEET-based mosquito repellent?

A. Because the instructions for safe use of DEET and safe use of sunscreen are different, CDC does not recommend using products that combine DEET with sunscreen.

Q. Should I wear mosquito repellent indoors?

A. Probably not. If mosquitoes are biting you while you are indoors, check window and door screens for holes that may be letting mosquitoes inside and repair them.

Q. Which mosquito repellent works the best?

A. The most effective repellents contain DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), which is an ingredient used to repel pests like mosquitoes and biting insects. The more DEET a repellent contains the longer time it can protect you from mosquito bites. A higher percent of DEET in a repellent does not mean that your protection is better—just that it will last longer. DEET concentrations higher than 50% do not increase the length of time you are protected.

Q. Which products contain "DEET"?

A. Most insect repellents that are available in stores are labeled with the chemical name for DEET. Look for N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide or, sometimes, N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenamide.

Q. Are non-DEET repellents effective?

A. Some non-DEET repellent products for the skin also provide some protection from mosquito bites. However, studies have suggested that other products do not offer the same level of protection as products containing DEET.

