

Protect Yourself - Choose an Insect Repellent!

Anyone can be at risk for mosquito or tick bites this season. Mosquitoes can bite at any time of the day, however most species bite more actively at dawn and dusk. Ticks are most commonly encountered in wooded areas and along trail edges. Ticks settle on tall grass and bushes, attaching themselves to any person or animal that passes by. There are many popular vacation spots in Ontario that have established tick populations, such as Long Point, Point Pelee National Park, Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, Rondeau Provincial Park, St. Lawrence Islands National Park, Turkey Point and Wainfleet Bog. Mosquito and tick bites can pose significant health concerns, including West Nile Virus and Lyme disease. For residents of Middlesex-London, the best protection from illness is to take preventative steps to reduce being bitten in the first place. Preventative measures include protection against insect bites by covering all exposed skin before heading outdoors and using insect repellents applied directly to the skin.

Minimizing your Risk

In addition to using insect repellents, you can reduce your risk of being bitten by taking the following steps:

- Avoid being outdoors at dawn or dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Remove or empty all items that may hold standing water, such as bird baths, pool covers, saucers under potted plants, pet bowls, wading pools and eaves troughs (which can collect leaves, becoming an ideal habitat for mosquito larvae).
- Wear light-coloured, long sleeved shirts, full length pants and closed shoes if you are outdoors to reduce attractiveness to mosquitoes and to allow you to see ticks more easily. Also, tuck your shirt into your pants and pull socks up over your pant legs to avoid tick bites. Always check your clothes and pets when you come back from areas where ticks may be found.
- Make sure screens do not have any tears or gaps and that all doors are tight-fitting.
- If you plan to travel to tropical areas where serious mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria are more common, see your doctor or visit a travel clinic several weeks before you go.

Choosing an Insect Repellent

Depending on your age and how long you will be outdoors, choose a product that meets your needs. Use only products approved by Health Canada, which have a Pest Control Products (PCP) registration number on the label and are indicated as insect repellents for human use.

DEET

The concentration of DEET in the repellent formula determines how long the product will provide protection. DEET repels mosquitoes for a longer duration than it repels ticks. When seeking protection against tick bites, look for a DEET-based product that specifies use for protection against ticks. Health Canada has also approved varying concentrations of DEET for different age groups. Prolonged use should be avoided in children less than 12 years of age.

- Up to 10% concentration for children aged six months to two years, applied no more than once daily. One application of DEET offers three hours of protection against mosquitoes.
- Up to 10% concentration for children aged two to 12, applied up to three times daily. One application of DEET offers three hours of protection against mosquitoes.
- Up to 30% concentration for adults and children over 12 years of age. One application of DEET should be effective for six hours against mosquitoes.

**** Do not use insect repellents containing DEET on infants less than six months of age. Instead, use a mosquito net when the child is outdoors in a crib, play pen or stroller.**

Alternative Products

While research continues to demonstrate that DEET is nontoxic to humans at the recommended concentrations and quantities on product labels, alternative insect repellents that do not contain DEET are available in Canada. Several of these alternative repellents have now been recognized by Health Canada as effective against mosquitoes, biting flies and ticks.

P-menthane 3.8 diol

Products containing this active ingredient are registered in Canada. They provide up to two hours of protection against mosquitoes; however, they should not be used on children under three years of age. These products can be applied up to two times a day.

Soybean Oil

Soybean oil, a two percent (2%) blocker repellent, provides protection for 3.5 hours against mosquitoes. There are no age restrictions or limitations on the frequency of use with this product.

Citronella

A lack of safety data on citronella products applied directly to the skin has prevented continued registration of these products in Canada; however, they remain on the market until a final decision is made. Products containing citronella protect against mosquito bites from 30 minutes to two hours. These products should not be used on infants or toddlers. Certain products containing citronella have a limit on the number of applications allowed per day, so be sure to read the product label.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellents

Sunscreen and personal insect repellents can be used safely at the same time. To properly apply the product, follow the instructions on the package. Apply the sunscreen first and then the insect repellent. Products combining skin moisturizer and insect repellent are not approved for use by Health Canada.

Products NOT Recommended for Personal Protection

The following products are **not** recommended for a variety of reasons. They may be ineffective or may have the potential to harm human health.

- Electronic devices or electrocuting devices such as bug zappers
- Wristbands, neckbands and ankle bands that contain repellents
- Odor-baited mosquito traps, citrus houseplants, vitamin B1
- Skin moisturizers and insect repellent-combination products

Remember: Insect repellents are a valuable measure to protect against insect bites; however no repellent is 100% effective. When spending time outdoors this season be sure to use natural protection (such as long sleeved, light coloured shirts and pants) in addition to personal insect repellents applied directly to the skin.

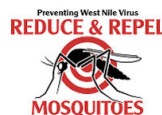
For more information contact:

Middlesex-London Health Unit at 519-663-5317 ext. 2300 or visit www.healthunit.com

This fact sheet contains information from Health Canada's Insect Repellents website:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/insect-eng.php>

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