

# Insect Bites and Stings



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Non-chemical ways to protect a person from mosquito bites:

- Wear long pants and long sleeves made of light-coloured, tightly woven clothing.
- Use netting over beds and child strollers.



### Non-chemical ways to protect a person from tick bites:

- Wear light-coloured, tightly woven clothing that is tight at the wrists and ankles (or tucked into socks or gloves).
- Check yourself, family members and pets for ticks before returning indoors; if you find one, remove the tick by grasping it with tweezers at the head/mouth area and very slowly and gently pulling the tick straight upwards until it releases.
- Do not apply heat or poison of any kind to ticks, as this does not work and may be harmful.



## INSECT REPELLENTS

Insect repellents may help to prevent bites from mosquitoes and ticks.

Insect repellents in Canada may contain the ingredients listed below. Different products repel different insects for different lengths of time depending on their ingredients and their strength. Products containing DEET and icaridin work the longest and are the only repellents that we know of that protect against ticks.



### DEET

- repels mosquitoes and ticks
- not to be used on children younger than 6 months of age
- for children 6 months to 2 years of age, use a product containing up to 10% DEET once daily only
- for children 3-12 years of age, use a product containing up to 10% DEET up to 3 times daily
- for people older than 12 years of age, use a product containing up to 30% DEET according to the package instructions

### Icaridin

(also called picaridin)

- repels mosquitoes and ticks
- not to be used on children younger than 6 months of age
- for all children older than 6 months of age and for adults, use a product containing up to 20% icaridin according to the package instructions



### Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus

(also called *p-menthane 3,8 diol* or *PMD*)

- repels mosquitoes; not known whether or not it repels ticks
- not recommended for children younger than 3 years of age

### Soybean Oil

- repels mosquitoes; not known whether or not it repels ticks
- may be used in any age group

### Citronella

- repels mosquitoes; not known whether or not it repels ticks
- not to be used on children younger than 2 years of age

### Metofluthrin

- repels mosquitoes; not known whether or not it repels ticks
- a small device that is attached to clothing or a chair that blows a chemical into the area around the chair or the person wearing the device; works best if person staying still in one spot
- may be used in all age groups
- take care not to let the vapour that is released touch the skin or be breathed in



### Non-chemical ways of repelling insects are best for pregnant or breastfeeding persons;

however, no harmful effects on unborn or breast-fed babies have been found with the use of DEET, icaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus (PMD). Chemical protection from mosquito bites is recommended for pregnant persons travelling to areas with a high risk of malaria, Lyme disease, Zika virus or other diseases spread by mosquitoes. Soybean oil is safe to use in pregnancy and breastfeeding. Citronella should be avoided in pregnancy or breastfeeding until more information about its safety in these situations is known.



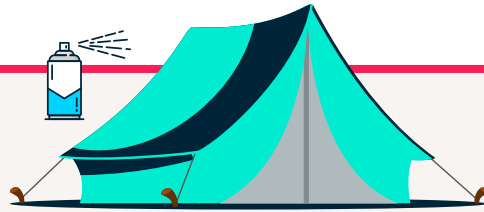
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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Using insect repellent safely and effectively:

- Keep all products out of reach of children and pets.
- Follow the instructions on the package carefully.
- Apply the product to clothing or to skin that is showing only. Do not use on skin under clothes.
- Apply sprays in open, well-ventilated areas.
- Do not apply to open wounds or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to a child's hands or face (so that it doesn't get in their mouth or eyes).
- If travelling to a high-risk area, spray tents, clothing, boots and bed nets with an insecticide (different from a repellent) called permethrin. NEVER apply permethrin on skin directly. Get advice from a travel clinic about protection needed in that region.

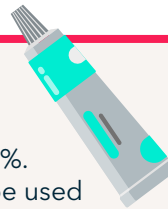


- Wash hands after applying insect repellent and wash the insect repellent off with soap and water when protection is no longer needed.
- If insect repellent gets into the eyes or mouth, rinse well with warm water.
- If sunscreen is also needed, apply sunscreen first, wait 20 minutes, then apply insect repellent. Avoid products that combine both sunscreen and insect repellent because sunscreen may need to be used more often than the insect repellent.



## HOW TO TREAT INSECT BITES OR STINGS:

- After a bite or sting, wash the spot with warm water and soap.
- If stung by a honeybee, remove the barbed stinger left in the skin by scraping with a clean, hard object such as a credit card or fingernail (bumbees and wasps do not leave stingers in the skin).
- Apply ice or a cool compress (such as a wet cloth) to relieve the irritation. To prevent frostbite, do not apply ice for longer than 10 minutes at a time.
- For pain, use a pain reliever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- For itching, use anti-itch lotions, creams or sprays. Nonprescription corticosteroid cream can also be used, e.g., hydrocortisone 0.5% or 1%. Oral antihistamines can be used to relieve itching, particularly if there is swelling. Topical antihistamines are not recommended.
- Avoid scratching the bite area. The skin may become damaged, causing an infection.
- If the symptoms do not improve over 24-48 hours or if the symptoms are worse, see a health-care professional.
- It is not common to have a serious reaction to an insect bite or sting unless there is an allergy.



**Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following symptoms develop within a few minutes up to several hours after a bite:**



- hot flush or itching all over the body
- chest or throat tightness (difficulty breathing)
- hives
- nausea, vomiting
- abdominal cramps
- dizziness, fainting
- hoarse voice or swelling in the throat
- changes in heart rate (fast or slow)

### Contact a doctor if:

- A rash develops around the bite
- The bite reaction spreads to a large area (whole arm or leg)
- An unusual reaction around the bite develops (such as large, hard, swollen skin or blisters)
- There is any unexplained skin rash or flulike symptoms within 30 days after the bite (for example: fever, nausea, vomiting, headache, joint pain). It is possible to be infected with a disease from the insect (mosquitoes can cause West Nile virus and ticks can cause Lyme disease)



**Those with a past history of severe allergic reactions may want to take the following precautions:**

- Wear a MedicAlert bracelet to let others know in an emergency situation that there is an allergy
- Carry at least one epinephrine injection (for example, EpiPen) for emergency use
- Get to the emergency department as soon as possible after a bite or sting

