

Bite Back Against Mosquitoes!

Tips on how to reduce mosquitoes and exposure to mosquito-borne diseases

Whether you're hitting the hiking trail, barbecuing in the back yard or camping out in the great outdoors, you'll want to protect against mosquito bites. Not only will your outdoor experiences be more pleasant without itchy red welts on your arms and legs, but it's also important to protect against possible insect-borne diseases, such as West Nile virus.

With this year's first human casualty (a woman in Alabama) as a result of West Nile virus reported by the Centers for Disease Control -- and over 4,000 human cases of West Nile virus reported in 2002 -- the fight against mosquito bites is becoming increasingly important.

Ralph Bram, Ph.D., has more than 40 years of experience as a medical and veterinary entomologist in government, university and industry positions. Formerly the national program leader of entomology at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bram offers the following tips for reducing mosquitoes around your home and keeping yourself protected from mosquito bites.

- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools and outdoor hot tubs and saunas. If they are not in use, empty them and keep them covered.
- After a rainstorm, eliminate the standing water that has collected on your property in places such as pool covers, old tires, buckets, flowerpots, toys and birdbaths.
- Limit outdoor activity at dawn and dusk, or anytime in the evening when mosquito activity is highest.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET, such as Ultrathon insect repellent from 3M. Originally developed to protect U.S. troops, Ultrathon insect repellent lotion was ranked the number one insect repellent in the June 2003 issue of a leading magazine that rates consumer products.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and hats to minimize the areas of exposed skin.
- Make sure there are no holes in screen doors or windows so mosquitoes can't get inside.
- Stay inside at night if there is a warning of mosquito-borne disease in effect.

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