

What Can You Do To Reduce Your Risk of Mosquito Bites?

Operation Mosquito S.T.I.N.G. is a strategy County Executive Andy Spano put in place to address the West Nile encephalitis outbreak. It is designed to track and control mosquitoes at an early stage to prevent illness due to West Nile virus in residents of Westchester County..

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Therefore, it is important that you reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. The Westchester County Department of Health recommends these precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

- Wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time.
- Consider the use of mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors.
- Use insect repellent with no more than 30% DEET, but use it sparingly and with care. Products which do not contain DEET may be less effective. (Care should be taken when selecting repellent products for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that repellents appropriate for use on children up to five years of age should contain no more than 10% DEET. Infants should not have DEET-containing repellents applied. Carefully read and follow directions on the container and wash treated skin when mosquito exposure has ended.)

How To Apply DEET Repellents

DEET -- the chemical N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide -- is an insect repellent that can reduce the risk of mosquito bites but must be used with caution. Be aware of the possible adverse health effects when making decisions about DEET.

Products containing DEET have been widely used as repellents for many years, but these products have occasionally been associated with some health problems. In general, reported adverse effects are limited to mild skin reactions and eye irritation. However, there have been some reports of serious nervous system problems in children ranging from slurred speech and confusion to seizures and coma.

Frequent application or saturation is not necessary. In fact, use as little as necessary for your situation. In addition, the New York State Department of Health recommends the following precautions when using repellents containing DEET:

- Store out of the reach of children and carefully read all instructions on the label before applying.

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Do NOT allow young children to apply DEET themselves.

- Do NOT apply DEET directly to children. Apply to your own hands and then put it on the child's clothing.
- Use insect repellents with no more than 30% DEET. Use 10% or less DEET for children up to five years of age. Do not apply DEET-containing repellents to infants.
- Avoid prolonged and excessive use of DEET. Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin or clothing. Do not treat unexposed skin. Frequent reapplication or saturation is unnecessary for effectiveness.
- Particularly with children, try to reduce the use of repellents by dressing children in long sleeves and long pants when possible and applying repellent to clothing instead of skin.
- Do NOT apply repellent in enclosed areas.
- DEET can be applied to clothing, but may damage some synthetic fabrics and plastics. Launder treated clothing.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Do NOT apply to eyes, nose, or mouth and do not apply to hands of small children because this may result in accidental eye contact or ingestion.
- If you believe you or a child is having an adverse reaction to a repellent containing DEET, wash the treated area immediately and call your health care provider or local poison control center.

**For more information, call the West Nile Virus Information Line at (914) 813-5609 or
Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or
visit our website at Westchestergov.com/health**

