



Fight the Bite!



Bug bites are usually just a pain. Some bites sting, itch or leave a red mark on the skin. But sometimes a bug bite can spread germs that cause disease. Children, adults over age 50, and people with health conditions are more likely to get sick from a bug bite.

Only a small number of insects may be carrying germs that cause disease, so being bitten does not mean a person will become sick. Protecting yourself from bug bites is the best way to keep you and others healthy.

Take These Steps to Fight the Bite:

Use bug spray. When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing no more than 30% DEET. Be sure to follow the directions. Do not use on babies under two months old. Be careful! Don't get it in your mouth or eyes. Wash your hands after you apply it.

Cover up. Wear long-sleeve shirts and long pants when you go outside. You can even spray your clothes with a bug repellent for more protection. Use mosquito netting over infant carriers when you are outdoors with babies.

About mosquitoes

Mosquitoes lay eggs near ditches, ponds and anything else that will hold water, like old tires, clogged gutters and trash cans. In the summer, large numbers of mosquitoes are common, especially after a lot of rain. Getting bitten by a mosquito can cause diseases like West Nile virus or encephalitis.

About ticks

Ticks live in moist, shaded woods, low-growing brush, dense weeds or piles of leaves. Ticks can even live in your own backyard, in woodpiles and areas of high grass. There are many kinds of ticks, like the dog tick, blacklegged tick and the lone star tick. Getting bitten by a tick can cause diseases like Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Take care when the sun goes down. Mosquitoes bite the most between dusk and dawn. Always use bug spray and wear protective clothing in the evening and early morning. If you can't protect yourself, try to stay inside at these times.

Drain standing water. Mosquitoes can breed in any place that holds water. Get rid of things like old tires and empty flower pots. Empty the water out of swimming pool covers, birdbaths, clogged gutters and trash cans—any place that holds standing water. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Empty children's wading pools and put them on their sides when they are not being used. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out.

How to do a tick check

After being outside, check your clothes and body to make sure there aren't any ticks on you. Get help checking the places you can't see like your back, the top of your head and in your hair.

If you wear light-colored clothing, you can see ticks more easily and brush them off before they become attached to your skin. If you find one tick, keep looking—there may be others that you didn't see the first time around. Ticks are hard to see—nymphs (ticks that are not quite adults yet) are the size of a pinhead, and adults are smaller than a sesame seed.

Remove a tick from your skin as soon as you notice it. Use fine-tipped tweezers to firmly grasp the tick very close to your skin. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from your skin. Then wash your skin with soap and warm water. Throw the dead tick away with your household trash.

Try to avoid crushing the tick's body. Do not worry if the tick's mouthparts remain in the skin. Once the mouthparts are removed from the rest of the tick, it can no longer transmit the Lyme disease germ. If you crush the tick by accident, clean your skin with soap and warm water or alcohol.

Do not use petroleum jelly (Vaseline), a hot match, nail polish or other products to remove a tick.

To find out more about bug bites, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov

The CDC also has a website called "Body and Mind" for children: www.bam.gov

You can search both sites for more information about mosquitoes, ticks, West Nile virus, Lyme disease and much more.



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