

Fight the Bite

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Mosquito and tick bites can be annoying, but more importantly, they can cause serious diseases, such as West Nile virus and Lyme disease. In the United States, West Nile virus is the most common disease spread by mosquitoes. West Nile virus can result in flu-like symptoms or cause serious illnesses that affect the brain, even resulting in coma and paralysis. In rare cases, it can even cause death.

Ticks may carry bacteria, viruses, or parasites that can also cause serious health problems. Lyme disease is the most common illness caused by ticks in the U.S. Typical symptoms include fever, skin rash, headache, and fatigue. If left untreated, infection can sometimes spread to joints, and the heart and nervous system.

As we spend more time outdoors, CDC recommends the following steps to prevent bites from mosquitoes and ticks.



Insect repellent, when used properly, can keep mosquitoes and ticks off your skin. Now we recommend using repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, and adults should help apply repellents to children under 12.



Wear long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and socks to keep bugs off your skin.



Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully, including your armpits, scalp, and groin. Remove ticks immediately using fine-tipped tweezers.



Early morning, late afternoon, and early evening are peak biting times for mosquitoes that spread West Nile virus. It's especially important to use repellent if you're outdoors at these times.



Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, even in small containers. Walk around the outside of your home at least once a week and empty any water that's collected in toys, pet food and water bowls, birdbaths, buckets, and other objects. Check under bushes and other hard-to-see places. Get rid of old tires and other objects that can collect water.



Create a tick-safe zone around your home. For example: remove leaf litter and clear grasses and brush around your home and the edge of the lawn, and place mulch between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks off the places you work and play the most.



Check for and repair holes in window and door screens.



Avoiding mosquitoes and ticks doesn't mean that you have to stay inside, in front of the TV. Work and play outside, but remember to apply an effective repellent to exposed skin and clothing.

You can get more information on mosquito- and tick-borne diseases at www.cdc.gov/westnile and www.cdc.gov/lyme.

Thank you and have a healthy and bite-free summer.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.