



How to Choose and Use Insect Repellent

Time in the great outdoors includes the creatures that come with it - bugs. We do recommend that children use insect repellent and below are some additional suggestions to help deter insect exposure.

- Avoid scented soaps, perfumes, and hairspray as those can attract insects.
- Try to stay indoors during dawn and dusk, when insects are out in large numbers.
- Steer clear of areas where bugs tend to be such as stagnant water, and dark, humid places, uncovered food, and blooming gardens.
- Avoid wearing brightly colored and flowery clothing.

Since many times it is impractical to limit time outdoors or to wear long sleeves and pants, it is good to apply an insect repellent to your child.

Insect Repellent – which one to choose?

DEET: It is safe to use 10-30% DEET insect repellent if your child is **more than 2 months old**.

- 10% DEET will last 2 hours
- 30% DEET will last for 5 hours, so choose the lowest DEET to provide protection while you are out.
- Products over 30% **do not offer extra protection**. Avoid combination sunscreen/insect repellent products, as the sunscreen needs to be reapplied but the DEET should not be.

Picaridin: In addition to DEET, Picaridin 5-10% is available in the US. It is odorless, does not need to be washed off, and is non-carcinogenic, but does not seem to be as strong as DEET. However, it is safe for all ages and seems to get the job done most of the time. It needs to be reapplied every 3-4 hours.

Essential oils/Natural products/Others:

Many other products exist, such as essential oils from cedar, eucalyptus, lemon, and soybean.

- **Oil of eucalyptus is not recommended for children under 3 years old.**
- Citronella only repels insects for a few minutes and only over a short distance.
- Permethrin is applied to clothing and equipment, not to skin, and will last for several washings.

Be sure to read all labels and directions, and to apply in well-ventilated, open areas. Do not spray directly on the face; instead spray on your hand and apply to face, but avoid the mouth, nose, and eyes. Use just enough to cover exposed skin and clothes. Thicker application is not more effective. Wash off insect repellent when your child comes inside for the day, and wash clothing.

Repellents that have not been found to be effective include wristbands, garlic, vitamin B1, ultrasonic devices, bird or bat houses, or bug zappers.

What about stings?

Remember, insect repellent only works against biting insects such as mosquitoes, chiggers, ticks, fleas, and biting flies. They unfortunately do not repel stinging insects such as bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets, and scorpions.

If your child has been stung and there is a visible stinger, remove it by pushing it backwards with your fingernail or a credit card. Do not pinch as this can push more venom into the skin. Wash with soapy water, apply ice, and elevate the affected area. Call your doctor with any concerns; call 911 if wheezing, mouth swelling, any trouble breathing, or rapid heart rate begins.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

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