

Bug Bite Prevention

The best protection against insects and ticks is avoidance- keep children away from thickly wooded areas, stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods, and gardens where flowers are in bloom. Don't use scented soaps, perfumes, or hair sprays on your child. Avoid dressing your child in brightly colored or flowery print clothing. And keep children indoors whenever possible at dusk, when many biting insects emerge.

If your child is bitten or stung, remove the stinger as quickly as possible. The best method is to use a fingernail or credit card to scrape the visible stinger off horizontally (avoid squeezing the stinger, which may inject more venom into the skin.)

Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective against ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile Virus and other viruses. The current CDC and AAP recommendation for children over 2 months of age is to use 30% DEET.

DEET should not be used on children under 2 months of age, or on the hands of young children who might suck on their fingers. You can apply the insecticide instead to the wrists/cuffs of long, lightweight shirts and pants to minimize absorption of the chemical. You should wash off repellents with soap and water once back indoors.

The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10% to over 30%. 10% DEET only protects for about 30 minutes- inadequate for most outings. The concentration of DEET varies significantly from product to product so be sure to read the label of any product you purchase.

Repellents made from essential oils found in plants such as Citronella, Cedar, Eucalyptus, and Soybean are generally much less effective than DEET, and may provide only short-term (less than 2 hours) protection.

Do NOT use combination sunscreen/insect repellents- sunscreens need to be reapplied every 2 hours, and repellents should NOT be reapplied. DEET may also make the SPF factor lower, decreasing the sunscreen's effectiveness.