



Insect Repellents

There are so many insect repellents out there. What kind is best for my children? Insect repellents come in many forms including aerosols, sprays, liquids, creams, and sticks. Some are made from chemicals and some have natural ingredients.

Keep in mind that insect repellents prevent bites from biting insects but not stinging insects. Biting insects include mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, chiggers, and biting flies. Stinging insects include bees, hornets, and wasps.
Available Repellents

The following are types of repellents that are not effective:

- * Wristbands soaked in chemical repellents
- * Garlic or vitamin B1 taken by mouth
- * Ultrasonic devices that give off sound waves designed to keep insects away
- * Bird or bat houses
- * Backyard bug zappers (Insects may actually be attracted to your yard.)

DEET

DEET is a chemical used in insect repellents. The amount of DEET in insect repellents varies from product to product, so it's important to read the label of any product you buy. The amount of DEET may range from less than 10% to more than 30%.

Studies show that products with higher amounts of DEET protect people longer. For example, products with amounts around 10% may repel pests for about 2 hours, while products with amounts of about 24% last an average of 5 hours. But studies also show that products with amounts of DEET greater than 30% don't offer any extra protection.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that repellents should contain no more than 30% DEET when used on children. Insect repellents also are not recommended for children younger than 2 months.

Tips for Using Repellents Safely

The following are guidelines on how to use insect repellents safely.

Dos

- * Read the label and follow all directions and precautions.
- * Only apply insect repellents on the outside of your child's clothing and on exposed skin.
- * Spray repellents in open areas to avoid breathing them in.

- * Use just enough repellent to cover your child's clothing and exposed skin. Using more doesn't make the repellent more effective. Avoid reapplying unless necessary.
- * Assist young children when applying insect repellents on their own. Older children also should be supervised when using these products.
- * Wash your children's skin with soap and water to remove any repellent when they return indoors, and wash their clothing before they wear it again.

Don'ts

- * Never apply insect repellent to children younger than 2 months.
- * Repellents should not be sprayed directly onto your child's face. Instead, spray a little on your hands first and then rub it on your child's face. Avoid the eyes and mouth.
- * Insect repellents should not be applied on cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- * Don't buy products that combine DEET with sunscreen. The DEET may make the sun protection factor (SPF) less effective. These products can overexpose your child to DEET because the sunscreen needs to be reapplied often.