



## INSECT BITE PREVENTION

Insects are real pests, and they are crafty: They not only cause discomfort, but for travellers they can transmit numerous major diseases, including yellow fever, malaria, dengue fever, Zika virus and Japanese encephalitis. The risk of insect-borne diseases is highest in sub-tropical and tropical, developing countries.

Avoiding insect bites is essential - but easier said than done. Travelvax believes that the best defence is to understand their habits, dress properly and use [insect repellent](#) correctly.

The smoke from burning insect coils is ineffective in open, well-ventilated areas, and annoying and unhealthy in closed areas. Citronella and other repellents of plant origin repel insects but not all of them have the duration of protection and spectrum of effectiveness offered by proven repellents like DEET and insecticides such as Permethrin. Taking Vitamin B does not deter biting insects, although it may reduce skin irritation that can occur after being bitten.

### HOW TO AVOID INSECT BITES

#### **Wear protective clothing**

Proper clothing provides a physical shield against insects. It's better to cover up than strip down when outdoors, particularly at dawn and dusk.

While it may not be always practical, garments made from thick, tightly-woven fabric are better than those made from sheer fabric. Many insects can bite through flimsy cloth, especially when you bend or stretch. The best colours are light green, tan, white and khaki - insects seem to be attracted to dark colours (and light colours enable you to see them easier). Shoes are better than sandals or thongs: many biting insects fly just above ground level or crawl on the ground.

#### **Make yourself unattractive**

The active ingredients in repellents block the insect's ability to recognise the user as a source of food so don't wear perfumes, after-shave, scented hair sprays etc. that could suppress this action. NB. Cosmetics can also be scented.

#### **Take evasive action**

When outside, lie on something - such as a hammock or a blanket. Don't lie directly on the ground. Never leave clothing on the ground. Shake it thoroughly before putting it on. Also, never dry clothing on the ground - use hangers or a rope. Flies and other insects can lay eggs on wet clothing, which may invade skin after hatching.

If camping, follow these tips:

- Select a campsite that is high, dry, clean and uncluttered.
- Keep food utensils and garbage covered.
- Take care around trees where fruit has fallen and is rotting; favourite conditions for bees and wasps.
- Avoid stripping branches from trees, disturbing logs and rocks; vibrations annoy insects.
- Get rid of open containers that can collect water in which insects can breed. Insects breed and feed close to home.
- Check yourself thoroughly each day for ticks and other insects.

#### **Prepare your accommodation**

Air-conditioned rooms allow you to keep windows closed and insects outside, and cool environments are less attractive to many insects. Air currents from fans and air-conditioning seem to repel insects.

A knockdown spray used 30 minutes before bedtime will eliminate any insects that may have entered the room. However, this offers only a short term solution if insects are able to enter the room.

A bed net\* offers excellent protection against insects. The net must be free of tears, be tucked under the mattress day and night (if practical) and have holes small enough to prevent tiny insects like sand-flies from entering.

## **Use Insect repellent and/or Permethrin**

The most [effective insect repellents](#)\* contain DEET (N,N-diethyl metatoluamide), Citrionol (extract of lemon eucalyptus or PMD) or Picaridin. The use of insect repellents combined with suntan lotion is not recommended. Also very effective is Permethrin, a synthetic contact insecticide available in easy-to-use kits and sprays\*.

Permethrin is a derivative of an insecticide found in chrysanthemums. It acts as a neurotoxin in insects and kills by causing paralysis. It is cheap and very safe - skin rashes are rare and generally mild - and no serious toxic effects have been reported. Permethrin can be used for soaking clothing, knapsacks, tents, bed nets, curtains etc, or in spray form. The effects can last for many months, even after items are laundered. Impregnating a bed net with permethrin greatly increases its effectiveness.

Unlike Permethrin, DEET, Citrionol and Picaridin are designed to repel insects rather than kill them. Insects are attracted to humans and warm-blooded animals because of carbon dioxide and other odours. Body heat may also play a role. These repellents interfere with the ability of insects' sensory organs to home in on carbon dioxide and are effective against virtually all disease-carrying insects.

### **When using repellents:**

- Read the product instructions carefully and follow them.
- Remember that rain, swimming and excessive perspiration reduce the length of effectiveness.
- Cover all skin, but do not rub it in. A thin surface layer will suffice.
- Lotions provide longer protection; sprays containing alcohol provide the shortest protection.

Wash off repellent when no longer needed. The recommendations for DEET use in pregnant women do not differ from those for non-pregnant adults. DEET may be harmful to animals and also plants, and can damage leather and some plastics.

\*Available in Travelvax clinics or through our [online store](#).

**More information on insect bite avoidance and related health tips will be available during your Travelvax consultation. Call 1300 360 164 for the location of your nearest clinic.**