

Mosquito borne diseases

Avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes

health

Mosquitoes can carry diseases including Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and Murray Valley encephalitis virus. The best way to avoid disease is to avoid being bitten.

Protecting yourself from being bitten

Mosquitoes breed in still water. The following are examples of potential breeding sites and control strategies that you can use around the home:

- dispose of all tins, tyres and other rubbish containers that may hold water
- put sand around bases of pot plants to absorb excess water in the dish
- keep swimming pools chlorinated, salted or empty them completely when not in use for considerable periods
- empty children's wading pools regularly
- overturn boats and dinghies or remove the drain plug so they do not hold water
- empty flower vases, pot plants and other receptacles that hold water at least once a week.

Using mosquito repellents

You should use mosquito repellents to avoid being bitten. Repellents come in liquids, lotions, gels, aerosols and pump sprays.

Repellents containing N, N-Diethyl-m-toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are the most effective. Most natural or organic preparations are not as effective as those containing DEET or Picaridin.

Repellents contain DEET or Picaridin in different concentrations. Formulations with higher percentages provide longer protection. If using products with DEET, those with 15 to 20%, work best for adults in Australia.

Application of repellents

- Always read the label before using. Different products may give different protection times. Most products provide protection for 1 to 3 hours in typical situations. If you swim or sweat profusely protection will be less and you may need to reapply.
- If using a liquid, lotion or gel pour or squeeze it straight onto your hands and spread it evenly and completely on exposed skin in a thin layer. Avoid getting it on your eyes or lips. Wipe or wash your hands after you've finished applying it.
- If using an aerosol or pump spray, direct it to the area to be covered. Do not apply aerosols or pump sprays direct to your face - spray them on your hands and then carefully rub the repellent onto your face, neck etc making sure you don't get it on your eyes or lips.
- Use repellent sparingly on children. Do not apply repellent to children's hands because they may rub their eyes or may ingest repellent from their hands or fingers. If they apply repellent themselves make sure you supervise them and that they wash their hands afterwards.
- Discontinue using the repellent immediately if you think you have had a reaction to it (for children or adults). Please consult your doctor.
- Do not apply repellents on a daily basis for prolonged periods (for children or adults). If continued protection is needed, speak to your chemist who will be able to recommend alternatives.

Using screens when camping

When camping make sure your tents or other forms of accommodation are screened to stop mosquitoes getting in. Where necessary use mosquito nets. For greater protection you can treat the nets with a repellent/insecticide. You can buy these at camping stores.

Controlling mosquito numbers

- Inside the house use 'knockdown sprays' to kill mosquitoes. Sprays containing pyrethrins or synthetic alternatives (eg. bioresmethrin, tetramethrin and allethrin) are recommended as these have low toxicity and are safe for humans.
- You can also use vaporising devices to reduce mosquitoes in your home. Products used in these devices are considered safe but if you have any concerns consult your doctor.

Further information

For further information contact either your local council or the Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Unit, Department of Health, phone 1300 651 160.

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas>

Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.