

Keep Mosquitoes and Ticks From Bugging You This Summer: Take Steps to Prevent Bites

Summer allows more time for children to play outdoors, but when kids are covered with bug bites after spending time outside, parents may start to worry about disease spread by ticks, such as Lyme disease, or by mosquitoes, such as West Nile virus. Luckily, parents can take simple steps to prevent bites and diseases spread by bugs.



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Use an effective insect repellent

Parents may feel overwhelmed by the many bug protection products in the grocery aisle, wondering which ones are best. CDC recommends a variety of effective products. Check the label for one of the following active ingredients:

- DEET
- Picaridin
- IR 3535
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus

Most pediatricians recommend using products with 30 percent or less of these ingredients on kids. Once you've bought an insect repellent, use it whenever you and your children are outdoors. Put a few bottles or packets of repellent anywhere you might need them— in the car, by the door, in your bag. Make it easy so you'll remember. As hard as it may be to think about, any single bug bite has the potential to bring illness, so it's worth taking a moment for prevention.

Make your backyard a tick-safe zone

While you may think that ticks only live in the woods, ticks can also lurk in backyards. You can take some simple steps to make your backyard more tick-safe. Keep patios, play areas, and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation. Also, tick control chemicals are available for use by homeowners, or can be applied by a professional pest control expert.

Check for ticks

After playing outside, don't make ticks an uninvited guest in your home. Ticks can ride in on parents, kids, and even the family pet, so check your gear and pets as soon as you get inside, even if your outdoor adventures were only in the backyard.

Parents should check themselves and their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and especially in the hair. If you find a tick, remove it using fine-tipped tweezers as soon as you notice it. If a tick is attached to your skin for less than 24 hours, your chance of getting Lyme disease is extremely small. But to be safe, watch for signs or symptoms of Lyme disease such as rash or fever, and see a doctor if they develop.

Bathing when you get inside can also help you find ticks and remove them. Additionally, you can tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill any remaining ticks.

By following simple prevention steps, parents and kids can keep pests away so they can focus on fun outdoor activities like gardening, camping, hiking and just playing outdoors.

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/westnile or www.cdc.gov/lyme, or call CDC Info at 1-800-CDC-INFO.