

What you need to know about Insect Repellents

It is important to follow some simple rules to keep you and your family safe while using insect repellents.

1-800-222-1222

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DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide)

Insect repellents for use on the skin can contain 4% to 100% DEET. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC recommend using 10% to 30% DEET on children. DEET should not be used on children under the age of 2 months. DEET 10% protects for about 2 hours. DEET 30% protects for about 5 hours. Choose a repellent that provides protections for the amount of time that you will be outdoors. DEET containing products should be washed off when you come inside. Severe skin rashes, nausea, vomiting and seizures may occur if label directions are not followed or if DEET-containing products are used in excess.

Alternatives to DEET

Picaridin provides long lasting protection from insect bites. It is odorless and has a lighter feel on the skin. There are no age restrictions for using picaridin-containing products. Finally, picaridin has fewer toxic effects than DEET. Products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are also available. They share the safety profile of picaridin.

Make sure the product you have chosen is meant to be applied on the skin. Permethrin-containing products are for clothing and gear such as boots, pants, socks and tents.

All insect repellents can be used with sunscreen. It is better to use separate insect repellent and sunscreen products rather than the combination products because sunscreen should be reapplied every 2 hours. Insect repellents usually do not need to be reapplied. It is best to apply the sunscreen first.

Always read and follow the directions for use found on the label of insect repellents. Use the following safety tips:

- Do not apply on cuts, wounds or irritated skin
- Do not apply to the hands of young children or near their mouth or eyes
- Do not spray directly on the face; apply to hands first, then rub onto face
- Do not allow young children to apply insect repellents
- Do not use under clothing (applying to the outside of clothing is safe)
- Do not use too much
- Do not spray in an enclosed area or near food

Contact the Maryland Poison Center right away if an insect repellent is ingested or gets in the eyes.