

Repellents help take the sting out of summer

You can scarcely open the newspaper or watch the evening news these days without hearing stories about West Nile virus, Lyme disease and other insect-borne illnesses.

Proper use of insect repellents can protect your children from these diseases as well as irritating bug bites.

Following are recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Environmental Protection Agency regarding insect repellent use in children:

- Do not apply to children under 2 months of age.
- Use up to 30% DEET, depending on duration of outdoor activities. Avoid use of higher concentrations in children.
- Apply only to exposed skin and/or clothing. Do not use repellents under clothing.
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. Do not spray directly on face – spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Never apply over cuts, eczema or other breaks in the skin.
- A parent or caregiver should apply the repellent; children may inadvertently ingest it through hand-to-mouth activity.
- Wash repellents off with soap and water at the end of the day.
- Combination products containing DEET and sunscreen are not recommended, primarily because sunscreen should be reapplied frequently, particularly for activities centered around water, which will remove the sunscreen. In contrast, repellents should be applied as infrequently as possible.

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