



# Using Insect Repellents Safely

## What are Repellents?

- Repellents are chemicals applied to exposed skin or clothing that can provide protection from mosquitoes, ticks, and other biting pests. Repellents containing **DEET** are effective in repelling mosquitoes, biting flies, chiggers, fleas, and ticks.
- Repellents containing **Permethrin**, another common repellent, should be used **ONLY** on clothing.

## Why Use Repellents?

- Repellents help prevent insect bites that could cause serious disease, such as West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease. High risk groups include: infants, small children, and adults over 50. Never use repellents on infants younger than 2 months.

## What is DEET?

- DEET is the common name for N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide, which is an active ingredient in the most widely used insect repellents applied to the skin.

## Can I Use Sunscreen with Repellents?

- You can use sunscreen with repellents. However, DEET may reduce the effectiveness of sunscreen. Therefore, to prevent sunburn, reapply sunscreen frequently. Combination products are not recommended.

## How Do I Use Repellents with DEET Safely?

- Read all label directions before each use. Follow directions carefully.
- Do not apply over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to hands or near eyes & mouth of children.
- Do not spray directly on face. To apply on face, spray on hands first and then rub on face.
- Do not spray in enclosed areas. Avoid breathing in spray, & do not use near food.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin.
- If sprayed on clothing, wash clothing before wearing again.
- Avoid over-application. Application effectiveness depends on concentration of DEET.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Repellents containing DEET can be applied to clothing, window screens, tents, or sleeping bags.
- If you suspect that you or your child are reacting to an insect repellent, discontinue use, wash treated skin, and then call the poison control center (1-800-222-1222). If you go to a doctor, take the repellent container with you.

For more information, please contact the Genesee County Health Department at 810-257-3612. Visit our webpage at <http://health.co.genesee.mi.us>

## Choosing an Appropriate Concentration of DEET

A variety of products containing DEET (lotions, creams, gels, aerosols, and pump sprays) can be purchased in concentrations ranging from 4-100%. For most adults, products containing 10-35% DEET will provide adequate protection under most conditions.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that repellents used on children contain no more than 10% DEET.

