

Attack of the Mosquito

In 2009, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), there were no reported human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state of Louisiana and there have only been 3 cases reported in the US to date this year. Still, WNV remains a potentially serious illness and contact with mosquitoes should be avoided as much as possible.

Mosquitoes generally bite between dusk and dawn, but some also bite during the day. Even if you don't see mosquitoes, it is best to use repellent if you are going to be outside. Female mosquitoes bite humans and animals because they need the protein found in the blood to develop their eggs. They are attracted by the carbon dioxide from our breath or odors. The repellents do not kill the mosquito, just deter them from biting.

The Scoop on Repellents

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) actually registers repellent active ingredients for use on skin and clothing. Registering an ingredient means that the EPA has reviewed it and determined that it is effective and safe for humans if used according to the instructions. The CDC recommends using repellents with registered EPA ingredients, such as DEET and Picaridin. These two ingredients have been found to work better than some of the other registered active ingredients, and also provide longer protection. The duration of protection depends on several different factors, like amount of sweating and physical activity, amount of the active ingredient, or any water exposure. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the EPA have made several recommendations regarding insect repellent use in children:

- Do not apply to children under two months of age.
- Use up to 30% DEET, depending on duration of outdoor activities. If time outdoors will be just a couple of hours, use 10-15% DEET. If longer, then use 20-30%.

- Apply only to exposed skin and clothing. Do not apply under clothing.
- Do not apply over cuts, abrasions or eczema.
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and sparingly around the ears. Do not spray directly on the face, but on hands first and then apply. Wash hands immediately.
- Only the 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 sunscreen and DEET products are not recommended. Sunscreen needs to be reapplied frequently, while repellents should be applied as infrequently as possible.
- Do not spray repellents in enclosed areas.
- If you have a reaction, contact Poison Control immediately.

If you think your child may have an infected mosquito bite, call us at 744-4484.