



Insect Precautions Fact Sheet

- Many diseases are spread by infected insects such as mosquitoes or flies—or ticks, which are *arachnids* and related to spiders - and their bites can cause itching or discomfort.
- Before you travel outside of the country, or participate in outdoor activities during the warm months in Canada, be aware of the infected insects / bugs that might be present and know their peak biting times (e.g. day vs. night) and areas (e.g. indoors vs. outdoors, rural vs. urban).
- To minimize your risk, you should always take personal protective measures to avoid insect bites and ensure you have the appropriate preventive vaccines and / or medications.

Personal Protective Measures Against Insect Bites:

Cover up:

- Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved, loose fitting, tucked-in shirts, long pants, shoes or boots (not sandals), and a hat. Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours.

Use insect repellent on exposed skin:

- Insect repellents help to prevent blood-feeding insects from landing and biting.
- Repellents do **not** work against stinging insects such as bees, hornets, wasps or ants.
- Insect repellents that contain DEET or Icaridin / Picaridin are the most effective; use as directed by the manufacturer and only apply on exposed skin, not under clothing.
- Icaridin is preferred for children 6 months to 12 years of age. Make sure products are approved for use before using on children and avoid putting repellent on their hands.
- Do not spray directly on the face or apply to cuts, abrasions or irritated skin and don't breathe in aerosol or spray.
- Wash your hands after application and avoid contact with lips and eyes.
- Do not use products that contain both insect repellent and sunscreen.
- If you need to apply both sunscreen and repellent, apply the sunscreen first and let it soak into the skin for about 15 minutes, then apply the repellent.
- When travelling to areas with a high risk of diseases spread by insects, reapply repellent as directed.
- If you want to minimize the amount of repellent used, apply at times of the day when insects are most active and exposure is more likely.
- Shower or wash repellent-treated skin when danger of being bitten is removed.

Consider your accommodations:

- Stay in a well-screened or completely enclosed air-conditioned room.
- Avoid staying in poorly constructed housing such as mud, adobe or thatch structures.

Sleep under a bed net, preferably treated with insecticide, e.g. permethrin:

- Make sure the net is intact (no tears) and tuck it under the mattress.
- Make sure it is not touching you (you could be bitten through the net).
- Use for playpens, cribs, or strollers to protect young children.

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Apply a permethrin insecticide to clothing and other travel gear for greater protection

- Although permethrin is not available in Canada, travel health clinics can advise you how to purchase it and treat gear either before or during your trip, as directed.
- Permethrin-treated clothing may give effective protection for 2 weeks or six washings.
- Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- DEET may be used, but be aware that it can damage plastic / synthetic materials.

Mosquitoes

- Mosquitoes are the insects most commonly associated with spreading disease.
- Night-time, or “dusk to dawn” biters, spread Malaria and Japanese Encephalitis.
- Daytime, or “sunrise to sunset” biters, spread Zika, Dengue Fever, Chikungunya, West Nile Virus and Yellow Fever (see Fact Sheets).
- Daytime biters also bite in artificial light so you need to use protection after dark in well-lit areas or indoors if the mosquitoes have managed to get inside.
- Currently, in Canada, West Nile Virus is the only viral infection spread by mosquitoes.
- It is more common in August and September.

Ticks

- Not all ticks are infected, but the infected ones can cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which is carried by the black-legged tick / deer tick.
- Protect yourself against tick bites in tick-infested areas by using bug spray with DEET and following the personal protective measures on page 1 and the Lyme Disease Fact Sheet.

Biting flies

- Biting flies can transmit diseases, for example, Leishmaniasis is caused by sand flies. It is a common parasitic disease of the tropics, subtropics and southern Europe.
- Bed netting with a mesh of 300 holes per square inch will keep out tiny sand flies.
- See the Leishmaniasis Fact Sheet.

Bed Bugs

- Bed Bugs are just a nuisance—they do not spread disease.
- There has been a recent increase in bedbug infestations, especially in developed countries.
- Travellers can take measures to avoid bedbug bites and avoid transporting them in luggage and clothing. See the Bed Bug Fact Sheet.

Other Questions?

- Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500
- Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Canadian Pediatric Society. June 2014
- CDC Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. July 2015
- Government of Canada. Jan. 2016

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