



# The Use of Insect Repellent by Child Care Programs

Insect repellents help reduce the exposure of children to insect bites, which can cause local allergic reactions and some diseases. Of particular concern are bites from mosquitoes and ticks. Mosquitoes can carry viruses and parasites that cause West Nile virus or other illnesses. Ticks can cause Lyme disease and other illnesses. These diseases can be serious but they are also rare. There has been an increase of reported cases of West Nile virus disease in California, and this is cause for concern. However, taking care to prevent exposure to the insects that carry these diseases is important, and preparation is better than panic when there is an outbreak.

## What is the most effective insect repellent?

The most effective repellents contain the chemical DEET (chemical name N, N-diethyl-metatoluamide). DEET does not kill insects—it makes it harder for them to locate humans. None of the presently marketed non-DEET products offer the duration of protection of those containing DEET. Until more products become licensed by the EPA, wearing protective clothing, and using DEET on clothing and exposed areas of skin, offers the best protection.

Repellents with DEET are effective only at short distances, so you may still see mosquitoes or other insects flying nearby even when you have applied a repellent. As long as you are not getting bitten, there is no reason to apply more DEET.

## Using insect repellents with DEET

Repellents are available with concentrations ranging from 10 percent to 30 percent DEET. The higher the concentration, the longer the product's effects will last. Use the concentration of DEET that is appropriate for the amount of time you will be exposed. Insect

repellents containing DEET with a concentration of 10 percent appear to be as safe as products with concentration of 30 percent for adults, when used according to the directions on the product labels. Followed the directions on the label exactly.

DEET insect repellents should be used with caution on children 2 months to 12 years of age. DEET is not recommended for infants under 2 months old.

Use DEET sparingly on exposed skin only; do not apply under clothing. Do not use DEET on the hands of young children. Do not apply to hands, areas around the mouth, eyes, or on skin that is irritated or has open sores. Wash treated skin with soap and water after returning indoors; wash treated clothing. Avoid spraying in enclosed areas and do not use DEET around food.

Because repellents can cause a skin reaction, parents or guardians should apply repellent to children once or twice at home before it is used in child care to be sure the child is not sensitive or allergic to it, and provide written consent to apply insect repellents in child care. If there is a reaction, wash the affected skin and call the parent or guardian to seek medical advice.

For more information, see CCHP's related Health and Safety Notes *Summer Safety* and *West Nile Virus: What You Should Know*. Visit [www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org](http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org) or call the Healthline (1-800-333-3212) for copies.

## References

<http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/e200399v1>

[www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm).

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect\\_repellent.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm).

by Judy Calder, RN, MS (07/03) (rev. 08/4/04)

## Parent/Guardian Permission to Apply Insect Repellent to Child

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

As a parent, I recognize that insect bites to my child pose a risk of allergic reactions and disease.

Therefore, I give permission for the staff of \_\_\_\_\_ name of child care program to apply an insect repellent approved for use on children (name of product) \_\_\_\_\_

to my child under the following conditions:

1. When mosquitoes are present.
2. During field trips that may expose a child to ticks or mosquitoes.
3. Always used according to directions on the label.
4. Applied only to exposed skin and clothes.
5. Not applied to babies under 2 months.
6. Not applied near eyes or mouth or on hands.

DEET-based products offer the best protection against mosquitos. Use of the product may occasionally cause a skin reaction. If that happens, we will discontinue use of the product, wash affected skin and notify you so you can seek advice from your health care provider. It is best if you use this or a similar product on your child once or twice at home first to monitor for reactions.

I have checked and initialed below all applicable information regarding the child care program's choice in brand/type and use of insect repellent for my child:

\_\_\_ Staff may use the program's insect repellent indicated above according to the directions on the product label.

\_\_\_ I do not know of any allergies my child has to children's insect repellent.

\_\_\_ My child is allergic to some insect repellents. Please use only the following brand(s)/type(s) of repellent: \_\_\_\_\_, according to the directions on the label.

\_\_\_ I have provided the following brand/type of insect repellent for use on my child:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ For medical or personal reasons, please DO NOT apply insect repellent to the following areas of my child's body:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Please do not apply insect repellent to my child.**

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Provider's Signature (optional): \_\_\_\_\_