



INFO

From our mosquito experts

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MOSQUITO PROTECTION

As mosquitoes have been a biting nuisance throughout human history, it's no surprise that people have invented creative "home remedies" in an attempt to fend them off. From eating garlic to taking vitamin B tablets or rubbing fabric softener on the skin, people have attempted several methods for avoiding mosquito bites. The scientists at the SC Johnson Institute of Insect Science for Family Health in Racine, Wisconsin are happy to offer expert opinions on what will effectively help people repel mosquitoes—and what won't.

One of the most common misconceptions about personal repellents is that a higher concentration of active ingredient signifies better protection. The truth is, the higher concentration of an active ingredient generally increases the duration of protection from mosquito bites.

"In general as you increase the amount of active ingredient, like DEET or Picaridin, for example, it actually increases the duration of protection from mosquito



A higher concentration of active ingredients in a personal repellent increases the duration of protection.



bites—it's not that it's going to repel mosquitoes better," states Julie Palm, researcher, at SC Johnson. "Generally, a product with 25 percent DEET will last longer than a product with 15 percent DEET, but they'll be equally effective at repelling mosquitoes."



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The second misunderstanding is that applying personal repellent on general areas of the body will provide ample protection. The truth is mosquitoes can detect even small areas of exposed skin where personal repellent hasn't been applied.

“To ensure that you're protecting yourself as best as possible against mosquito bites, it's crucial that you go the extra mile to apply personal repellent to hard-to-reach



Mosquitoes can detect even small areas of exposed skin. Apply personal repellent to hard-to-reach spots.



spots,” states Tom Mascari, researcher at SC Johnson. “Mosquitoes can bite through clothing as well, so you should apply to all exposed skin and over your clothing, following application guidelines properly. Do not apply DEET product on or near acetate, rayon spandex or other synthetic materials (other than nylon).”

Applying personal repellent according to product labels is key. Look for personal repellents that are registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). OFF!® personal repellents are registered with the EPA.

Using alternative, do-it-yourself repellent methods is not proven to be effective.

Some of these “methods” may range from using dish soap or a cup of beer as a spatial repellent, eating garlic, rubbing fabric softener on the skin, taking vitamin B tablets or spraying certain perfumes or mouthwashes as personal repellents. The bottom line is that these methods have not been approved by the EPA.



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“We know some people swear by old wives’ tales to keep mosquitoes away,” Palm adds. “But repellents that are registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are required to have data to support the claims on their labels. If you need an effective way to repel mosquitoes, we recommend you look for one that contains DEET or Picaridin and is backed by research.”