

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAM NO. 24

BUG OFF

HOW CAN YOU AVOID BEING EATEN ALIVE THIS SUMMER

It is that time of year when you want to start enjoying the outdoors again. The last thing you need is hordes of mosquitoes descending on you. Those pink bumps they leave behind last for weeks. And boy do they itch. If the bite and the itching were all there is, it would not be too bad. The West Nile Virus threat is all too real to ignore in southern California. As of Friday, July 1, 2005, two cases of this disease have been reported in California, but county health officials remember all too well the casualties of last year. "People should really take the time to protect themselves," said Steve Peckham, a spokesman for SC Johnson and OFF brand insect repellent, "because really, all it takes is one infected mosquito to infect you."

So how do you protect yourself from blood sucking mosquitoes? Use the old stand-by of the last 50-plus year: DEET. DEET is an active ingredient found in most insect repellents today. The higher the concentration, the longer the repellent lasts. Refer to Los Angeles Unified School District Pest of the Month Program No.17 for more details on insect repellents.

The Los Angeles Unified School District **DO NOT** recommend or endorse any product. If you have any questions concerning DEET, or any other insect repellent, contact your doctor. If you decide to use insect repellents, **IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU CAREFULLY READ AND FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS ON THE PRODUCT LABEL.**

Dr. John Randall, an entomologist with SC Johnson, headquartered in Racine, Wisconsin, stated that mosquitoes and other blood seeking insects hone in on body heat and carbon dioxide emitting from your body. But as DEET evaporates from your clothes and skin, it confuses mosquitoes by disrupting the receptors on their antennae. They will come near you, but they wouldn't be able to feast.

"DEET is very safe," says Dr. Donald Barceloux, a medical toxicologist and emergency room physician at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, "And it's the best insect repellent that we have."

ATTRACTION FACTOR

Some people attract more mosquitoes and other blood seekers than others. Randall said the following are top attraction factors:

- **DIET:** Different odors draw in more mosquitoes. Contrary to common belief, eating garlic does not keep the bugs away.
- **AGE:** Young children tend to be more susceptible to mosquito bites.
- **LEVEL OF EXERCISE:** Sweat pulls them in like a magnet. The warm moisture in sweat is too tempting. Plus, you are exhaling more carbon dioxide the more active you are.
- **OBESITY:** People who weigh much more than others are prime targets for blood- seekers.
- **DARK COLORS:** Mosquitoes tend to flock to people who wear dark-colored clothing.

HOW TO APPLY INSECT REPELLENT

Whether you are a big target or not, it is smart to take a minute to apply insect repellent with DEET when you know you are going to be outside during peak mosquito-biting hours such as at dawn or dusk.

And, to make sure you're as safe as can be this summer, the experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), offer the following tips:

- **READ THE LABEL! MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS AND DO NOT OVER-APPLY ESPECIALLY ON CHILDREN. TOO MUCH DEET COULD CAUSE SOME HEALTH PROBLEMS.**
- If you are using a spray or spritz, make sure you rub it in after applying it. In one lab experiment, mosquitoes could actually find the tiny untreated spots on a human arm.
- Make sure you treat all exposed skin and clothing. Be thorough in your treatment. If you use your hands to rub in repellent, always wash your hands after application.
- Make sure to reapply when the label calls for it. Some DEET products with low concentrations last only 1½ hours, while others with high concentrations can last up to 8 hours. Refer to Los Angeles Unified School District Pest of the Month Program No. 17 for more information on insect repellents.
- Use the right product for the right adventure. If you are going to be outside for awhile, use a lower concentration of DEET. If you are going on an all-day hike in the mountains, use something with a high concentration. Some recommendations state that you should not use higher than a 10% concentration of DEET on children and 25% or less for adults.

NOTE: NEVER LET CHILDREN APPLY INSECT REPELLENTS BY THEMSELVES. They could accidentally spray in their eyes, mouth, or nose, which could make them ill.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

Dr. Eric Frykman, San Bernardino County public health officer, offered the following advice (aside from using repellents) for avoiding mosquito bites:

- Drain standing water that has collected to prevent mosquito breeding. All it takes is a bottle cap of water for mosquitoes to breed.
- Avoid going outside during dawn and dusk hours when mosquitoes are very active.
- Use citronella candles, or similar products, when hosting an outdoor barbecue or party.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts or blouses, long pants, socks and hats to minimize areas of skin exposure.
- Install or repair screens on doors and windows.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MOSQUITOES AND WEST NILE VIRUS, REFER TO THE FOLLOWING LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT MATERIALS:

- Los Angeles Unified School District Pest of the Month Programs 15, 17, 18, and 19.
- Letters dated 1/26/05 entitled: Potential West Nile Virus Outbreak in southern California in 2005, and 2/15/05 The West Nile Virus Situation.

Note: Some of the information in this program was excerpted from an article written in The Daily Bulletin (an Inland Empire newspaper) dated Monday, July 4, 2005. This source is acknowledged here.

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