

UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

Mosquitos

Q: What safe methods do you suggest for protecting my family from mosquito bites?

A: Of the 47 species of mosquito that live in New Hampshire, only a few actually bite, and a handful of those are capable of transmitting disease. Your first lines of defense: (1) Try to minimize time spent outdoors at dawn and dusk, the peak times of mosquito activity. (2) When you do go out, dress in long sleeves and pants (though insects can bite through material).

Insect repellents will allow you to spend time outdoors with a reduced risk of mosquito bites. The active ingredients in effective repellents don't actually repel insects, but confuse them by blocking the receptors that mosquitoes (as well as gnats, punkies, no-see-ums and other insects) use to detect appropriate hosts for them to bite. DEET and Picaridin are commonly available and most active ingredients considered most effective protecting against mosquito bites. Another ingredient, IR3535 (ethyl butyl acetyl aminopropionate) is nearly as effective. Products come as lotions, pump sprays, pressurized cans, and wipes. Look at the list of active ingredients and their concentrations to help decide which one to buy.

These repellents are registered pesticides: Always follow label directions when using repellents. Typically, the more active ingredient in the product, the longer it will provide protection. The effectiveness of repellents varies with the active ingredient(s), the concentration, and the target species.

For more information about insect repellents, check out our fact sheet at http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000963_Rep1073.pdf

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu.