

Deet Tips

For Proper Protection

The chemical N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide — more commonly known as DEET — is an insect repellent that can reduce the risk of mosquito bites, but must be used with caution. DEET comes in many different concentrations, with percentages as low as five percent or as high as 100 percent. By using products with lower concentrations of DEET and by applying as little of the product as needed for your outdoor activities, you can reduce your exposure to DEET. Products containing DEET have been occasionally associated with some health problems (*skin reactions, including rash, swelling and itching; eye irritation; and, less frequently, slurred speech, confusion and seizures*). Frequent reuse or saturation is unnecessary for effectiveness. Use only what and how much you need for your situation.

In addition, the New York State Department of Health recommends taking these precautions when using repellents that contain DEET:

- Store out of the reach of children, and read all instructions on the label before applying.
- Do NOT allow children to apply DEET to themselves.
- Do NOT apply DEET directly on children. Apply to your own hands, and then put it on the child.
- When applying DEET to children, avoid putting it on the child's hands.
- Avoid prolonged and excessive use of DEET products. Use sparingly to cover exposed skin or clothing.
- Do NOT apply repellents in enclosed areas.
- Put product on hands to apply on the face, and avoid the eyes, nose and mouth.
- Do NOT use on skin that is damaged by sunburn, cuts, rashes or skin conditions, such as psoriasis or acne.
- DEET may be applied to clothing, but may damage some synthetic fabrics and plastics.
- Wash treated skin with soap and water after returning indoors. Launder treated clothes separately.
- If you believe you or a child is having an adverse reaction to a repellent containing DEET, wash the treated area immediately, and contact your health care provider or local poison control center.

Remember, the use of DEET is only one way to reduce the risk of mosquito bites. The State Health Department also encourages other precautions — such as wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts when in areas of high mosquito activity. Try to reduce the use of repellents in children, since they may be at greater risk for reactions to repellents, in part, because their exposure may be greater. Also, eliminate items on your property in which standing water can collect and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

