



CONTACT:

Susan Harris-Broomfield
Nebraska Extension Educator
Rural Health, Wellness, & Safety
308-832-0645

What's the Buzz on Insect Repellent and Kids?

Summer is upon us and families are enjoying more time outdoors. One thing that can spoil this time is mosquitos, and parents need to know what research says about the safety of insect repellents on small children. Diethyltoluamide (or Deet – the brand name in many insect repellents) has a bad rap with regard to use on children, but you might be surprised to discover it is not as bad as you thought.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that insect repellents containing Deet are safe for children as young as 2 months. Bug repellents containing Deet come in varying strengths - some contain up to 30 percent. **A higher concentration of Deet does not mean a product is stronger, only that it lasts longer.**

Another ingredient similar to Deet in some repellents is Picaridin, which Europeans have used for 10 years and is becoming more popular in products available in the U.S. There are also natural repellents made with oils such as lemongrass and citronella.

Along with repellents, parents and caregivers can prevent insect bites by dressing children in long sleeved clothing with socks and shoes. **The recommendation is that parents avoid products that combine both sunscreen and insect repellent.** While it is good to reapply sunscreen often, it is not recommended to reapply the insect repellents.

Parents Magazine highlights many of the products you can buy in the “*Ultimate Guide to Bug Repellent for Kids*” with specific application information for each product. Find this guide at parents.com/health/bug-bites/guide-to-bug-repellent-for-kids/.

The Centers for Disease Control also have recommendations for insect repellent use and safety, found at cdc.gov/westnile/prevention/index.html. It is always a good idea to ask your trusted pediatrician what he or she recommends for your child.

There are so many positive reasons to get children outdoors to play and explore. Be informed on how you can prevent insect bites from scratching your plans.

Source: Lynn DeVries, Educator – UNL Extension

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