

## GROWING UP

### Stop Getting Ticked Off by Bug Bites

By Dan Florell, Ph.D. & Praveena Salins, M.D.

It's the end of another long summer day. The kids are exhausted after playing outside most of the day and are ready for bed. As they are changing to their pajamas, you notice that one of your precious little ones has a red welt on his chest. Then you notice a couple of more and wonder what you should do.

In this case, the red welts are the likely result of a bug bite or several in this case. It is a difficult task to prevent people and children in particular from getting bitten when they go outside. The range of options available to repel the insect hordes from bites is vast. Some people prefer the commercial bug repellants while others rely on home-remedies. The question becomes what is truly the most effective approach? Fortunately this has been answered through several studies of various insect repellants.

By far the most effective insect repellent ingredient out there is DEET (N-Diethyl-3-Methylbenzamide). Ignore other products such as garlic, ultrasonic devices, bug zappers, and citronella as they are not nearly as effective as DEET. DEET is put into many commercial insect repellants. When you find a repellent with DEET, look carefully to see what percentage of DEET is in the product. Repellents that have 10% DEET repel insects for about two hours while those that have 24% offer five hours of protection. In this case more isn't always merrier, 30% or more of DEET doesn't offer any extra protection and should not be used with children.

Once you have found a good insect repellent with DEET, get ready to apply it to your child. Begin by only applying the insect repellent on the outside of your child's clothing and on exposed skin and use just enough to cover the exposed areas. Apply the repellent in open areas so as to avoid breathing it in and when applying to the face, spray a little in your hand and manually put it on your child's face avoiding the eyes and mouth. Finally, make sure children don't apply it themselves as they are more likely to overspray and get it in their eyes and mouth.

A couple caveats with insect repellent include never applying it to toddlers less than two months of age and do not buy products that combine DEET and sunscreen as DEET only needs to be applied once and sunscreen typically is applied every couple of hours. Once your child has had a fun-filled, bite-free day outdoors, make sure to wash his skin with soap and water to remove any repellent.

Playing outdoors is one of the highlights of childhood. Let's make sure they can do it without worrying about getting bitten by various insects.

#### Biography:

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