



# Insect Repellent Guide for Parents and Caregivers

Insect bites can be itchy or painful for children and may also spread serious diseases like **West Nile virus** or **Lyme disease**. Insect repellent can help protect your child from insect bites by keeping mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas away – insect repellent does not kill insects. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tests and registers the active ingredients in repellents to make sure they are safe when used as directed and work to prevent insect bites. Not all active ingredients are suggested for use on young children, so it's important to know which repellents are recommended for children of different ages.

## Which repellents can I use if my child is...?

**Younger than 3 years:**

- > DEET
- > Picaridin
- > IR3535

Do **not** use repellents with oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD) on children younger than 3 years.

**Older than 3 years:**

- > DEET
- > Picaridin
- > IR3535
- > Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)
- > Para-menthane-diol (PMD)

## How will I know if the repellent I'm using is registered by the EPA?

Look for an EPA registration number on the back label of your repellent product. The registration number is usually listed at the bottom of the product label.

**Example:** EPA Reg. No. 1234-567

## Should I use natural or homemade repellents?

Homemade repellents or products labelled "natural" (including essential oils) are not required to be tested or registered by the EPA, so they often do not work to prevent insect bites. Natural products may also cause allergic reactions or skin irritation for some children. Since EPA-registered repellents have been tested for safety and are proven to work, they are suggested for use to prevent insect bites **and** diseases caused by insect bites.

You can also look up your product on the EPA's website to see if it's registered:

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>





## ***How can I safely apply insect repellent on my child?***

Always follow the label instructions of the product you are using. Children should never apply repellent themselves or handle repellent products. In general, insect repellents may cause eye irritation and may be harmful if swallowed.

When applying repellent on children:

### **DO**



- Apply repellent to the outside of your child's clothing or on exposed skin
- Spray repellent on your hands and then apply to your child's face, avoiding the eyes and mouth (wash your hands after application)
- Use just enough repellent to cover your child's clothing and skin (using more repellent doesn't make it work better)
- Only reapply repellent according to label instructions, or if your child gets wet

### **DON'T**



- Spray repellent directly on your child's face
- Spray or apply repellent under clothing
- Apply repellent on red or irritated skin
- Apply insect repellent on your child's hands because they may put their hands in their mouth
- Use repellent products that combine DEET and sunscreen (The DEET in these products may prevent the sunscreen from working as designed. Using these products can also over-expose your child to DEET because sunscreen needs to be applied more often than DEET. To protect your child from sunburns and insect bites, **apply sunscreen first, then repellent separately**. Reapply sunscreen as directed by the label instructions of the sunscreen product you are using.)

After using insect repellent for the day and returning indoors, wash your child's skin and clothing with soap and water to remove any repellent.

**Important:** If you think your child is having a skin reaction from insect repellent, stop using the product and wash your child's skin with soap and water. Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if your child swallows repellent, has a severe skin reaction, or gets repellent in their eyes. (Have the repellent label with you when you call.)

For more information about insect repellent, visit: [www.bit.ly/CDPHRepellent](http://www.bit.ly/CDPHRepellent)

