

Tips for avoiding or soothing mosquito bites

By Mandy Kendall

The wonderful summer weather brings a welcome opportunity to have social gatherings and to be outdoors. Unfortunately there are also often unwelcome guests who can invade the party.



Mosquitoes are not only irritating they can also be dangerous to your health. According to World Health Organization, a million people a year die from malaria, a mosquito transmitted disease. Although malaria is not thought to be a public health concern in North America, there are other diseases transmitted by mosquitoes in the United States that warrant concern, such as West Nile Virus, LaCrosse encephalitis and Western equine encephalitis.

Although incidents of these diseases are fairly rare in the U.S., any strong and prolonged flu like symptoms should not be ignored if you have taken ill within two weeks of being bitten by mosquitoes.

So, avoidance of mosquito bites is equally as important as knowing how to take the sting out of a bite should you get one.

Below are some tips to avoid being bothered by mosquitoes in the first place and how to minimize the irritation if you do:

1. **Oils.** A study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture compared four synthetic mosquito repellents and eight natural mosquito repellents and found that lemon eucalyptus was the most effective repellent, even more than a 7 percent DEET repellent. To make your own natural repellent put 2 or 3 drops of an essential oil, like eucalyptus or tea tree, into a cup

of water and then spray onto the skin. Also, combining the essential oil with a carrier oil like olive, almond or jojoba can help repel unwanted biters. Eucalyptus and citronella make a nice, effective combination. Pay special attention to covering parts of the body where the blood vessels are close to the surface, e.g. neck, armpits, ears, wrists etc. (Please follow manufacturer's directions about dilution of essential oils as some can burn the skin if not diluted sufficiently, especially on young skin.)

2. **Fans.** Apparently, mosquitoes can only fly about 8 mph so if you can place yourself in the path of a fan you'll become a less desirable landing strip.

3. **Garlic.** Garlic will exude from our pores if we eat enough of it and mosquitoes don't like it. It's also great rubbed on the skin (mixed with a little olive oil to take out the sting) but can make you less desirable to everyone else too!

4. **Avoid.** Sugar revs up the metabolism and make us a sweet treat. Also avoid perfumed personal products and laundry detergents that will make you alluring to all the wrong creatures. Avoid being out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

5. **Welcome.** Dragonflies, bats and purple martins put mosquitoes are high on their list of favorite foods.

6. **Remove.** Pools of stagnant water such as planter pots, sprinkler system and puddles as these are prime breeding grounds.

7. **Smoke.** Candles or a smudge box will deter mosquitoes from hanging around.

A mosquito bite itches and swells as the result of an allergic reaction to the anticoagulant in their saliva. Alternately compressing and releasing the bite can help the toxin to disperse. If you've been bitten, try one of the following:

1. **Vinegar.** A small amount directly onto the bump may help reduce the irritation. If you've got a lot of bites you may want to take a hot bath and add 2-3 cups to the water.

2. **Aloe.** Fresh gel from the plant itself works wonders (just cut an inch from the end of the leaf and squeeze out the gel straight onto the inflamed area) or you can buy aloe gel at most health shops.

3. **Baking soda paste.** Make a thick paste of baking soda and a little water and apply directly to affected area

4. **Honey.** Take a small amount of honey (local honey if you can get it) and apply directly to the bite. Honey also has anti-microbial properties that can help prevent infection.

5. **Essential oils.** If they didn't help prevent the bite in the first place they can often take the sting out afterwards. Just mix a drop with some water and dab onto the bite. (Again, please follow manufacturer's directions about dilution as some oils can burn the skin if not diluted sufficiently, especially on young skin.)

6. **Fabric softener sheets.** Pin several fabric softener dryer sheets to your clothes when you are outside. The sheets apparently have a repelling effect on mosquitoes.

7. **Soap.** Rubbing dry soap gently on the affected area may help provide temporary relief from the itching. Wash off when the itching fades.

8. **Toothpaste.** Apply a small amount of all natural peppermint or neem-based toothpaste and allow to dry.

If you have any tried and tested home repellants or remedies I'd love to have you share them below.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe.

If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.