

# Fight the Bite

## *As mosquito populations rise, Iowans urged to protect and prevent*

Recent rains have resulted in more mosquitoes buzzing through the Iowa air. The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) urges Iowans to take action to protect themselves against mosquito bites, and to prevent the mosquito population from growing. Although mosquitoes carrying the West Nile virus typically are not seen until late summer through early fall, one case of West Nile virus has been reported in Iowa this year and surrounding states have also reported cases of the disease caused by mosquito bites. This makes it even more important to use insect repellents properly:

- Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label).
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using repellent sprays, do not spray directly on your face - spray on your hands first and then apply to your face.
- Do not allow children to handle or spray the product. When using on children, apply to your own hands first and then put it on the child. Avoid applying repellent to children's hands because children frequently put their hands in their eyes and mouths.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing. Heavy application does not give you better or longer lasting protection.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water or bathe. This is particularly important when repellents are used repeatedly in a day or on consecutive days.
- If you (or your child) get a rash or other reaction from a repellent, stop using the repellent, wash the repellent off with mild soap and water, and call a local poison control center for further guidance. If you go to a doctor, it might be helpful to take the repellent with you.
- The more DEET a product contains, the longer the repellent can protect against mosquito bites. However, concentrations higher than 50 percent do not increase the length of protection. For most situations, 10 percent to 25 percent DEET is adequate.

In addition to using insect repellent, you can protect yourself from mosquito bites by:

- Wearing long sleeves and long pants when possible.
- Making sure window and door screens are "bug tight."
- Being aware of peak hours of mosquito activity: dusk and dawn.
- Replacing your outdoor lights with yellow "bug" lights which tend to attract fewer mosquitoes than ordinary light. The yellow lights are NOT repellents, however.

This is also a time to be aware of how you can help control mosquito numbers. Get rid of the areas where mosquitoes breed - dump the water out of barrels, tires, turned over truck toppers, and anything else that will hold rainwater. As long as those containers can hold water for even a week, they can contribute to mosquito populations. Change the water in bird baths every two or three days.

For more information on insect repellent use and safety, visit <http://bit.ly/1kLncK4>. For information on West Nile virus, see <http://bit.ly/1iTO2Vc>.