

Insect Avoidance

Insect Avoidance Measures

Insect bites are an extremely annoying and unpleasant part of life and a significant cause of disease worldwide. These are particularly relevant to travellers and residents in tropical or semi-tropical locations and are essential to urban and rural areas.

Malaria is the most well-known mosquito-borne disease. However, many other conditions of concern worldwide include Dengue Fever, Yellow fever, Japanese Encephalitis, and Ross River Fever. In addition, several infections can be caused by flies, ticks and lice, which are also commonplace.

Some vaccines protect against some of the above illnesses, and some drugs may also have a protective effect. However, these measures will not give complete protection against all insect-borne diseases. In addition, the recent increase in resistant Malaria strains means that the traveller or resident cannot solely rely on medication.

Hence, avoiding being bitten in the first place is the most important step in preventing illnesses.



Ways of minimising your exposure to mosquito and other insect bites are to:

Cover up: Wear protective clothing covering arms and legs to reduce the amount of skin exposure.

Decrease your attraction: Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours and strong scents, so wear light colours and avoid perfumes and after-shave.

Use Screens:

- Make sure you have well-screened accommodation.
- Spray indoors with insecticide aerosols.
- Consider mosquito coils for balconies or poorly screened accommodation.

Mosquito nets are cheap, practical and especially useful when travelling.

Protect bare skin: Use repellents containing DEET as this repels mosquitos, ticks and sandflies, which may carry diseases. Adequate strength of DEET is necessary. IMC stocks DEET-based insect repellent – please enquire.

Use Permethrin: This is a contact insecticide that can be used on mats etc., around the home. In addition, it can be used on bedding and clothing when travelling (see opposite).

Avoid being a breeder: You can reduce potential breeding grounds around your home. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water and do not travel long distances, so check for water in the base of pot plants, drains, old tyres etc. The local authorities may also spray areas (known as 'fogging') to kill mosquito larvae. Stringent measures to prevent insect contact significantly reduce the risk of contracting disease. For example, it is estimated that malaria risk is decreased by 90% with the above-listed measures. This is particularly relevant when travelling to areas with a high likelihood of exposure. Further advice on these measures can be discussed with your family doctor.





Permethrin solution is widely used as a defence against insect-borne illnesses and is used widely by Governments, Defence forces, etc. When used in conjunction with repellents such as RID, it is an extremely useful aid to the traveller or resident as a preventative measure.

About DEET

- The U.S. EPA has determined that when label instructions are followed, all concentrations of DEET repellents can be used from age two months. However, the International Medical Clinic advises caution with babies below six months old.
- The benefits of DEET appear to plateau at a concentration of about 30%.
- The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends that the maximum DEET concentration for infants and children be 30% and that the lowest concentration for the expected amount of time spent outdoors be used.
- Only apply insect repellents to exposed skin taking care to avoid the eyes and mouth.
- Read the entire product label before using the repellent.
- Do not apply on wounds or scratches.
- Avoid over-saturation - it's not necessary for adequate protection.
- Do not apply to the hands of small children since they frequently put their hands into their mouths.
- Do not allow children to apply the product themselves.
- Cleanse the skin with soap and water after returning indoors.
- Keep out of the reach of children because, like many chemicals, DEET can be toxic if ingested.
- A very small percentage of children and adults may be sensitive to chemicals such as DEET. If there is a suspected reaction to an insect repellent, wash the area and seek medical attention.

IMC stocks DEET insect repellent at two strengths:

- 19% Adult preparation (RID ®)
- 7% - for children from age two months

However, children above six months can use adult strength preparation, reducing the frequency of reapplication. Reapplication is advised every 6 hours for the adult strength and every 2 hours for the lower strength.

