

Daily Union Article

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Title: What's Bugging You? - Repellant Safety

As I was packing my children's duffle bags for camp, I came to an item on their list that I didn't have—insect repellent.

At the store, I look at every label and every brand only to find "Keep out of reach of children" plastered across the front. Hmmmm.... how am I supposed to send insect repellent to camp when they aren't supposed to touch it?

Perhaps the best thing parents can do is to review the safety practices with their children and hope they follow them! Here's a recap offered by the Environmental Protection Agency for using repellents safely:

#### Applying the Product

- Follow the label directions to ensure proper use.
- Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing. Do not use under clothing.
- Do not apply near eyes and mouth, and apply sparingly around ears.
- When using sprays, do not spray directly into face; spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- Do not spray in enclosed areas.
- Avoid breathing a spray product.
- Do not use it near food.

#### Other Safety Tips

- After returning indoors, wash treated skin and clothes with soap and water.
- Do not use any product on pets or other animals unless the label clearly states it is for animals.
- Most insect repellents do not work against lice or fleas.
- Store insect repellents safely out of the reach of children, in a locked utility cabinet or garden shed.

When selecting insect repellent, look for ones that contain either DEET or Picaridin. The higher the percentage of DEET, the longer the repellent will work. For example, an insect repellent with 4.75% DEET protects your child for about 1½ hours., while 7% Picaridin provides 3 to 4 hours of protection.

There are additional ways you can help reduce insect bites around your home, as well. With the large amounts of rain we have received the past two months, there is likely water standing in several places around your yard. Standing water is a great place for mosquito larvae to multiply and grow.

You can reduce the mosquito population in and around your home by taking a few precautionary steps. Take a walk around your yard and make special note of any containers or

spaces that are prone to collect water. If you kill mosquito larvae before they are able to mature (a 7-10 day process), you are reducing the number of mosquito's that will be able to get to you while enjoying your time outside.

Here are a few tips to get you started on removing prime real estate for mosquito larvae:

- Remove containers or similar objects such as soda cans, tires, buckets, plastic sheeting and others from areas surrounding your home.
- Do not allow water to remain in flower pot bases or pet dishes for longer than a week.
- Clean gutters, downspouts, roofs, etc. to remove leaves and other debris that may hold standing water.
- Water in birdbaths and children's wading pools should be changed at least once a week.

Other tips for the home include:

- Use screens on windows and doors. Repair holes in screens to keep the mosquitos outdoors.
- Use air conditioning, if available.

Not all mosquitos are the same. Different mosquitos spread different viruses that can be you ill, if not become a life-threatening challenge. Check out the mosquito prevention fact sheet posted on the Geary County K-State Research and Extension website at <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/> to learn more. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!