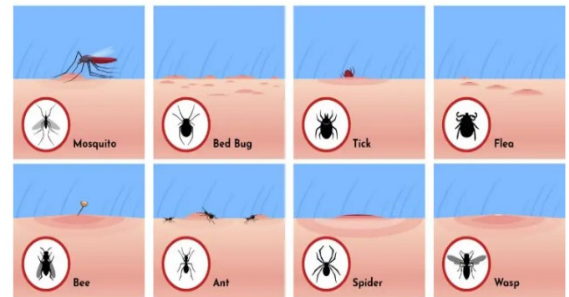


# How to Protect Yourself Against Harmful Insect Bites and Stings

Maj Miesha R. Sheffey  
Public Health Officer

Common insects and the potential risks they pose:

- **Mosquitoes:** Can transmit diseases like West Nile virus, Zika virus, malaria, and dengue fever
- **Ticks:** Can lead to Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses
- **Spiders:** While most are harmless, some, like the black widow or brown recluse, can deliver venomous bites requiring medical attention
- **Bees and Wasps:** Their stings can cause allergic reactions and in severe cases, anaphylaxis



To minimize the risk of insect bites and stings, consider the following safety tips:

- **Use Insect Repellent:** Apply an EPA-approved insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus when outdoors
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Dress in long sleeves, pants, and socks, especially in wooded or grassy areas, to reduce skin exposure
- **Avoid Scented Products:** Stay away from heavily scented lotions, perfumes, or soaps that may attract insects
- **Stay Calm Around Stinging Insects:** Avoid swatting, as sudden movements can provoke them
- **Be Cautious with Food:** When eating outdoors, keep food covered to prevent attracting insects

If you do get bitten or stung, follow these steps to minimize discomfort and prevent complications:

- **Clean the Area:** Wash the affected area with soap and water to reduce the risk of infection
- **Apply a Cold Compress:** Use a cold pack or cloth to alleviate swelling and itching
- **Take Over-the-Counter Medications:** Antihistamines or hydrocortisone cream can help relieve itching and inflammation
- **Monitor for Symptoms:** Watch for signs of infection or allergic reactions, such as increased redness, swelling, or fever
- **Seek Medical Attention:** If you experience severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, hives, or persistent pain, seek medical help immediately

## \*\*\*Consider your Destination\*\*\*

Your travel destination and activities can influence the precautions you should take against insect bites and stings. For information on required vaccines, medications, and health risks related to your travel, please visit the 9th Medical Group Public Health Office or check the CDC's Destinations pages.

While it may be difficult to completely avoid insects, you can significantly reduce the risk they pose to you and your loved ones by taking effective preventive measures and knowing how to respond to bites and stings.

