



Maryland Poison Center  
University of Maryland School of Pharmacy

1-800-222-1222

# Poison Prevention Press

May/June 2011

Volume 4, Issue 3

## Using Insect Repellents: What You Need to Know

### The Maryland Poison Center is on Facebook!

Get up to date information from the poison experts! The MPC will share poison tips, send out alerts, share news clips and have fun with poison trivia on our new Facebook page. We encourage you to "Like" our page and share it with your friends. We ask that specific questions not be posted on the page...it is not intended as a substitute for calling our specialists in poison information at 1-800-222-1222.

### Did you know that...

• In 2010, the Maryland Poison Center managed over 100 cases involving insect repellents with the majority resulting in no or minor effects?

• Insect repellents do not kill insects...they make a person unattractive to the insect for feeding?

Summertime brings fun outdoor activities. We enjoy spending more time outdoors at cook outs, camp outs, the beach, the pool and in the yard. Summertime also brings insects that bite. There are products that can be used to protect us from insect bites. Use of these products will help reduce exposure to diseases carried by insects. Some products have been around for a while, others are new. It is important to follow some simple rules to keep you and your family safe while using insect repellents.



DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) is a common ingredient in insect repellents. Use products containing no more than 10-30% DEET on children. Higher concentrations can be dangerous. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend using DEET on children under the age of 2 months. Picaridin is an effective alternative to DEET and has fewer known toxic effects. It provides long lasting protection and is more pleasant to use since it is odorless and has a lighter feel on the skin. There are no age restrictions for using picaridin-containing products. Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus and Oil of Citronella are natural alternatives to DEET and picaridin and share the safety profile of picaridin.

In general, the higher the concentration of an insect repellent, the longer it will provide protection. Choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that you will be outdoors. DEET containing products should be washed off upon coming inside. All insect repellents can be used with sunscreen products. It is better to use individual insect repellent and sunscreen products rather than the combination products because frequent reapplication of sunscreen is recommended, while insect repellents usually do not have to be reapplied. It is best to apply the sunscreen first.

Always read and follow the directions for use found on the label of insect repellents. Use the following safety tips:

- Do not apply on cuts, wounds or irritated skin
- Do not apply to the hands of young children, or near the mouth or the eyes
- Do not spray directly on the face; apply to hands first, then rub onto face
- Do not allow young children to apply insect repellents
- Do not use underneath clothing (applying to the outside of clothing is safe)
- Do not over-apply the product
- Do not spray in enclosed areas or near food

Contact the Maryland Poison Center if an insect repellent is ingested or gets in the eye. The poison experts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-222-1222.