



# A Parent's Guide to Insect Repellent

Insect bites can be itchy or painful for children and may spread serious diseases like **West Nile virus** or **Lyme disease**. Insect repellent helps protect your child from insect bites by keeping mosquitoes and ticks away – insect repellent does not kill insects.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tests and registers active ingredients in repellents to make sure they are safe to use and work to prevent mosquito and tick bites. Not all active ingredients are suggested for use on small children, so it's important to know which repellents are safe to use on children of different ages.

## Which repellents are safe to use if my child is..?



Younger than 2 months old:

**Insect repellents should NOT be used on babies younger than 2 months old.** To protect babies from insect bites, dress them in long sleeves and long pants, and cover the child's crib, stroller, or baby carrier with a tight-fitting net that will keep insects out.



Older than 2 months:

EPA-registered repellents containing one of the following active ingredients are safe to use according to label directions on children over 2 months of age:

> DEET      > Picaridin      > IR3535

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests using repellents with **no more than 30% DEET on children.**



Younger than 3 years old:

EPA-registered insect repellents containing the active ingredient **oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)** or **para-menthane-diol (PMD)** should **NOT be used on children younger than 3 years of age.**



## Should I use natural or homemade repellents?

Homemade repellents or products labelled "natural" (including essential oils) are not required to be tested or registered by the EPA, so they often do not work to prevent insect bites. Natural products may also cause allergic reactions or skin irritation for some children. Since EPA-registered repellents have been tested for safety and are proven to work, they are suggested for use to prevent insect bites **and** diseases caused by insect bites.

## How will I know if the repellent I'm using is registered by the EPA?

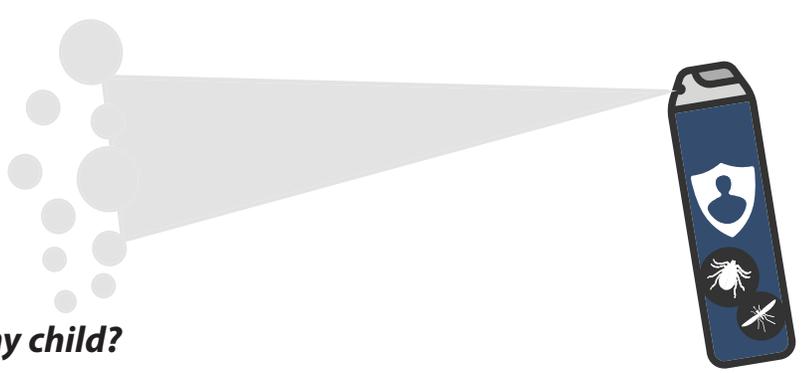
Look for an EPA registration number on the back label of your repellent product. The registration number is usually listed last on the product label.

*Example:* EPA Reg. No. 1234-567

You can also look up your product on the EPA's website to see if it's registered:

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>





## ***How can I safely apply insect repellent on my child?***

Always follow the label instructions of the product you are using. Children should never apply repellent themselves or handle repellent products. In general, insect repellents may cause eye irritation and may be harmful if swallowed.

### **DO** ✓

- Apply repellent to the outside of your child's clothing or on exposed skin
- Spray the product on your hands and then apply to your child's face, avoiding the eyes and mouth (Wash your hands after application)
- Use just enough repellent to cover your child's clothing and skin (Using more repellent doesn't make it work better)
- Only reapply repellent according to label instructions, or if your child gets wet

### **DON'T** ✗

- Spray repellent on your child's face
- Spray or apply repellent under clothing
- Apply repellent on red or irritated skin
- Apply insect repellent on your child's hands because they may put their hands in their mouth
- Use repellent products that combine DEET and sunscreen (The DEET in these products may prevent the sunscreen from working as designed. These products can also over-expose your child to DEET because sunscreen needs to be applied more often than DEET. To protect your child from sunburns and insect bites, **apply sunscreen first, then repellent separately**. Reapply sunscreen as directed by the label instructions of the sunscreen product you are using.)

After using insect repellent for the day and returning indoors, wash your child's skin and clothing with soap and water to remove any repellent.

**Important:** If you think your child is having a skin reaction from insect repellent, stop using the product and wash your child's skin with soap and water. Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if your child swallows repellent, has a severe skin reaction, or gets repellent in their eyes. (Have the repellent label with you when you call.)

For more information about insect repellent, visit: [www.bit.ly/CDPHRepellent](http://www.bit.ly/CDPHRepellent)

