



UK Health
Security
Agency



Large print version

Mosquito bite avoidance

Advice for travellers



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Information from the UK Health Security Agency and the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC).

In many countries, mosquito bites can spread diseases like chikungunya, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, malaria, West Nile virus, yellow fever and Zika. They can result in serious illness and some may even be fatal.

Avoid insect bites at all times including during the day. It is important to:

- Cover up
- Use repellents
- Use nets

Mosquitoes that spread chikungunya, dengue, West Nile virus, yellow fever and Zika mainly bite during the day and at dusk

Mosquitoes that spread malaria mainly bite in the evening and at night

What should I do before travelling?

Check travel health advice for your destinations, including disease and other health risks for each country and how best to reduce them using the **NaTHNaC** country information pages. Visit: **www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries**

See your practice nurse, GP, pharmacist or a travel clinic, ideally 4-6 weeks before travel to get appropriate advice for your trip.

Yellow fever vaccine is recommended for certain countries, and antimalarial tablets may be advised to protect against malaria for some destinations.

If you have health problems, are pregnant or planning pregnancy it is particularly important to get tailored pre-travel advice 6-8 weeks before travel. With careful preparation, most pregnant women are able to travel without experiencing health problems.

Three ways to avoid mosquito bites

1. Repellent

It is important to use an insect repellent day and night, indoors and outdoors, on any exposed skin.

A product with 50% DEET is recommended as a first choice. If DEET is not tolerated, use of a repellent containing the highest strength formulation available of either **icaridin (20%), eucalyptus citriodora oil, hydrated, cyclized or 3-ethlyaminopropionate** is recommended.

Remember:

- apply insect repellent according to instructions on the label – rub repellent into skin, making sure all skin is covered
- reapply insect repellent frequently, especially in hot countries and after swimming
- apply repellent after sunscreen (use 30 to 50 SPF sunscreen as DEET can make sunscreen less effective)
- 50% DEET is safe for those pregnant and breast-feeding and for babies older than two months
- get advice before you travel from your doctor or pharmacist if your baby is aged under 2 months
- take insect repellents with you – in case of shortages at your destination

2. Clothing

When possible, wear clothing with long sleeves, trousers, skirts and dresses, socks and shoes to stop mosquitoes biting your skin.

Permethrin (an insecticide) treated clothing and bed nets provide additional protection against biting mosquitoes.

3. Nets

If your accommodation is not air-conditioned or if you are sleeping outdoors, use insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

Check your net for rips and tuck the ends under the mattress.

There may also be a risk of bites from ticks and other insects; the same protective measures will help reduce bites from these too. More information is available at:
www.travelhealthpro.org.uk

What should I do if I feel unwell?

Suspected malaria is a medical emergency and must be quickly excluded or treated. If you visit a malaria risk country and have a fever (38°C or more), flu like symptoms or any unusual symptoms during or after travel you must get urgent medical attention. Don't wait until you return to the UK if you are unwell; get medical help abroad.

Other infections including dengue and West Nile virus can also cause serious illness.

If you are ill after your return, tell your doctor about the trips abroad you took in the past year. If you have been to a tropical country, ask for a malaria blood test.

Further information

For more information visit **NaTHNaC** at:
www.travelhealthpro.org.uk

This large print leaflet and a standard version is also available in Arabic, Bengali, French, Gujarati, Hausa, Igbo, Punjabi, Spanish, Swahili, Yoruba, Urdu, Xhosa and in BSL, audio, braille and Easy Read.

The leaflet can be ordered or downloaded from:

www.healthpublications.gov.uk, by calling:

0300 123 1002 or by textphone: **0300 123 1003**

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