

Athletes and mosquito protection

Summer is a great time for sports. From professional athletes competing on an international stage to friends playing pickup games in their community or simply exercising outdoors, people are getting outside and being active. With outdoor exercise comes the need to protect yourself against mosquito bites. That is why the entomology experts at OFF!® offer recommendations on how athletes can avoid being bitten.

Like anybody, athletes need to protect against mosquito bites with personal repellents. Our entomologists recommend using products that have been registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and that contain active ingredient DEET or Picaridin. And it is especially important for those who are active outdoors for an extended period of time to use a personal repellent that has a higher concentration of active ingredient, which generally correlates to longer duration of the protection. For example, OFF! Active® aerosol, which contains 15 percent DEET, will provide up to 5 hours of protection against mosquitoes, while OFF! Deep Woods® aerosol, which contains 25 percent DEET, will protect for up to 8 hours against mosquitoes.

“OFF! Deep Woods® and OFF! Active® provide a long protection period, which is extremely important for athletes who may be outside in a competition for an extended time,” said Maude Meier, Ph.D., scientist at SC Johnson. “Mosquitoes are attracted to sweat and carbon dioxide, so when athletes are out there sweating and breathing heavily, it’s crucial they have proper protection.”

Some sporting activities, more than others, make us more vulnerable to getting bitten by mosquitoes. According to Julie Palm, researcher at SC Johnson, any activities around heavily wooded areas or standing water, like marshes or lakes, which are more likely to be pest-ridden, may expose athletes to greater numbers of mosquitoes. Interestingly though, sports that involve constant, quick movements are less problematic because mosquitoes can’t fly quickly enough to land on and bite people who are in motion.

“Another important thing to look out for is how much you’re wiping sweat or water off of your body during an athletic activity,” Palm said. “Anything that’s going to remove the active ingredient off of your skin will require reapplication of personal repellent.”

Most athletes know that, while exercising they need to stay hydrated and that when exercising outdoors they need to use sun protection. The advice the entomologists have for athletes is to keep mosquito protection as a top priority as well.