

OFF!® experts dispel widespread misconceptions about mosquito protection

Because mosquitoes have been a biting nuisance throughout human history, it's no surprise that people have invented creative home remedies in an attempt to fend them off. From eating garlic to taking vitamin B tablets or rubbing fabric softener on the skin, people have attempted several methods for avoiding mosquito bites. The entomology scientists and mosquito experts at OFF!® commented in this week's Mosquito Minute on the most widespread misconceptions about personal repellents, offering expert opinions on what will effectively help people repel mosquitoes—and what won't.

According to the entomologists at the SC Johnson Entomology Research Center in Racine, Wisconsin, one of the most common misconceptions about personal repellents is that a higher concentration of active ingredient signifies better protection.

"As you increase the amount of active ingredient, like DEET or Picaridin, for example, it actually increases the duration of protection from mosquito bites—it's not that it's going to repel mosquitoes better," said Julie Palm, researcher at SC Johnson. "Generally, a product with 25 percent DEET will last longer than a product with 15 percent DEET, but they'll be equally effective at repelling mosquitoes."

The second misunderstanding, according to Tom Mascari, researcher at SC Johnson, is that applying personal repellent on general areas of the body will provide ample protection. The truth is, mosquitoes can detect even small areas of exposed skin where personal repellent hasn't been applied.

"To ensure that you're protecting yourself as best as possible against mosquito bites, it's crucial that you go the extra mile to apply personal repellent to hard-to-reach spots," Mascari said. "Mosquitoes can bite through clothing as well, so you should apply to all exposed skin and over your clothing, following application guidelines properly." Do not apply DEET product on or near acetate, rayon spandex or other synthetic materials (other than nylon).

Applying personal repellent according to product labels is key. Look for personal repellents that are registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). OFF!® personal repellents are registered with the EPA.

This summer, with rising awareness of the Zika virus, conversations have surfaced on social media about do-it-yourself repellents, like using dish soap or a cup of beer as a spatial repellent, eating garlic, rubbing fabric softener on the skin, taking vitamin B tablets or spraying certain perfumes or mouthwashes as personal repellents. The bottom line is that these methods have not been approved by the EPA.

"We know some people swear by old wives' tales to keep mosquitoes away," Palm said. "But repellents that are registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, like all of the personal repellents in the OFF!® line, are required to have data to support the claims on their

labels. If you need an effective way to repel mosquitoes, we recommend you look for one that contains DEET or Picaridin, and backed by research.