

Weather and mosquito populations

Mosquito season generally lasts in the continental United States from spring to fall with summer being the peak season. However, mosquito populations may vary from one day to the next and from one area to another. According to the entomologists at OFF![®], weather is the driving force behind these fluctuations. And not only does weather affect the prevalence of mosquitoes in an area, but it can also impact a mosquito's ability to be a vector of the Zika virus.

"Mosquitoes are drawn to warm, humid weather and rainy climates because they need water to survive," said Julie Palm, researcher at SC Johnson. "Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water, and the larvae require water for their development. So, if you have water sitting around your home in pet water bowls, discarded tires, trash cans or other containers, these can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes."

Hurricane season, because it brings a lot of rainfall, can be followed by a spike in mosquito populations. Not only does warm, humid weather help mosquitoes breed, but it can also make it easier for mosquitoes to become Zika vectors.

"When a mosquito bites somebody who is infected with Zika, that mosquito can pick up the Zika virus, which replicates within its body, passes into its salivary glands and spreads to the next person it bites," said Maude Meier, Ph.D., scientist at SC Johnson. "Higher temperatures can actually cause the Zika virus to replicate more quickly within mosquitoes, which means they're able to more quickly transmit it."

When it comes to day-to-day factors, wind is an element that can keep mosquitoes away. These insects are lightweight and are not very strong flyers, so on windy days, most mosquitoes will hide in foliage for cover, waiting until it is calm enough for them to navigate.

Seasonal factors affect certain mosquito populations as well. Palm explained that snowmelt mosquitoes actually thrive in the springtime because of a snowy winter. These mosquitoes breed specifically in pools of melted snow during the spring months, so in preparing for next year's mosquito season, keep an eye out for snowfall this winter.