

ADVERTISING FEATURE

# HEALTH & FITNESS

## When it comes to mosquitos, people are their worst enemy

*Swating, wearing black clothing and having an ornamental pond are perfect ways to attract summer's pests*

It seems people are their own worst enemies when it comes to fending off mosquitoes.

According to Dr. Gordon Surgeoner, University of Guelph entomologist and Canada's leading mosquito expert, everything from our landscaping preferences to our toiletry selections can impact the number of summer vampires.

The bug doctor shares some insights on the most common mistakes made by homeowners.

1. If an ornamental pond is not properly maintained, it will create an upsurge in mosquito populations.

2. Mosquitoes thrive in the shade, so the more sunshine the homeowner can promote, especially in the early evening, the fewer mosquitoes. Too much shade also fosters damp conditions, ideal for mosquito development.

3. Cedars are favourite mosquito resting areas, while high grass is a favourite nesting area.

5. Studies show homeowners who use bug zappers are no better off than someone who does not. Only three out of every 10,000 insects zapped will be a mosquito. Even fewer will be the biting female mosquitoes.

6. Aggressive or fidgety movements increase a person's mosquito magnetism.

Nervous people are more likely to be targeted than calm ones.

7. One study revealed a 400-per cent increase in mosquito biting activity during full moons compared to nights with no moonlight.

8. Old tires, firewood and abandoned toys that harbour water or moisture stimulate mosquito breeding.

9. An obstructed eavestrough, poor drainage, dripping faucets, depressions in lawns and overwatering can lead to an abundance of standing water, ideal breeding conditions to bring thousands of new mosquitoes to life. (Mosquito eggs can survive in a dried state for up to five years.)

### PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VAMPIRES

Many parents are unaware of factors that contribute to increasing their child's mosquito magnetism. Sending a child out in a black rather than a white shirt will not only make him or her hotter, but it also makes them more attractive to bugs.

Children's play areas can also be a breeding

ground for mosquitos. Forgetting to change the water regularly in the wading pool could create a veritable breeding hotbed for mosquitoes. The same risk applies to your child's sandbox — it should be placed in a sunny place to allow for faster drying after heavy rains.

Hanging tire swings from trees also creates an ideal environment for mosquito larvae development. It's a good idea to drill holes in the bottom of the tire to prevent water accumulation. Be sure to keep it clear from debris.

### BUG REPELLENTS OFFER PROTECTION

You'll never eliminate the presence of biting bugs or the need for repellents.

When choosing protective products, Surgeoner's advice is to make an educated purchase.

Personal repellents work by confusing the mosquito's sophisticated sensory abilities.

Effective repellents contain DEET which jams the mosquito's sensory receptors. In effect, DEET-based repellents create a zone around your body that sends confusing messages to the mosquito, masking your presence.

People should also "check the label for a registered PCP number to be assured you're getting a product that meets repellency and safety standards," he said.

All repellents naturally evaporate over time. This process is accelerated with increased physical activity or perspiration. When the bugs start getting bolder, it's time to reapply.

### Other tips:

- Apply a light, even coating of repellent to any exposed skin, as areas left untreated — even as small as a dime — continue to be susceptible to bites.
- If using a spray or spritz repellent, be sure to rub it evenly on your skin. A spotty coverage does not give optimum protection.
- When putting repellent on your face, apply it to your hands first then rub it on to your face, keeping it away from your eyes and mouth.
- Repellent can also be applied to clothing as an added safeguard, but always read and follow repellent label directions.



PHOTO/JOHNSON WAX

## Mosquito facts

Mosquitoes are a major summer nuisance. Here's how the pesky summer vampire zooms in for its blood meal:

• Mosquitoes' attraction to movement, dark colour, carbon dioxide and body temperature make humans a prime target.

• The mosquito's mouth is made up of bristles and tubes. The bristles first poke a tiny hole in the skin, then saliva flows out of one tube and the blood is sucked up through another.

The proteins left behind by the mosquito are what cause the itching.

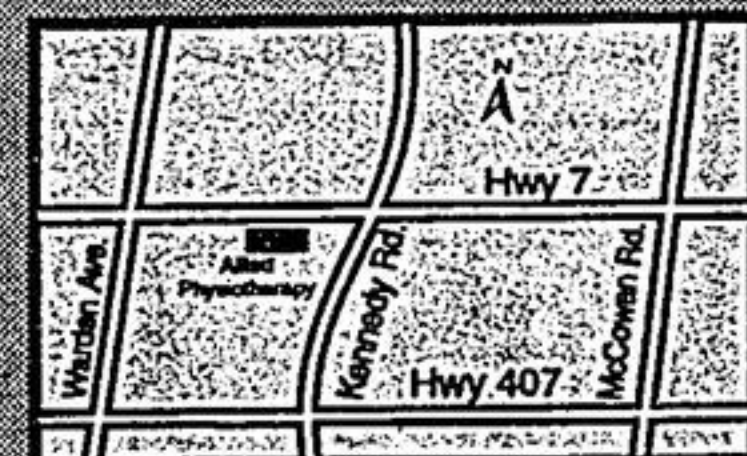
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(Watch for reason #2 next week)

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