

Proper use of DEET

DEET, the chemical N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide, is an insect repellent that can reduce the risk of mosquito bites but must be used with caution. Be aware of the possible adverse health effects when making decisions about DEET. Products containing DEET have been occasionally associated with some health problems (skin reactions, including rash, swelling and itching; eye irritation; and less frequently, slurred speech, confusion and seizures). Frequent application or saturation may not be necessary. Use as little DEET as needed for your situation. In addition, the New York State Department of Health recommends the following precautions when using repellents containing DEET:

- Store out of the reach of children and read all instructions on the label before applying.
- Do NOT allow young children to apply DEET themselves.
- Do NOT apply DEET directly to children. Apply to your own hands and then put it on the child. (According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, repellents used on children should contain no more than 10 percent DEET.)
- When applying DEET, avoid the child's face and hands.
- Avoid prolonged and excessive use of DEET. Use sparingly to cover exposed skin: do NOT treat unexposed skin.
- Do NOT apply repellents in enclosed areas.
- Do NOT apply directly on your face.
- DEET can be applied to clothing, but may damage some synthetic fabrics and plastics.
- Wash all treated skin and clothing after returning indoors.
- If you believe you or a child is having an adverse reaction to a repellent containing DEET wash the treated area immediately and call your health care provider or local poison control center.