

Spring Time and Children's Health

Insect Repellents for Children

By [Vincent Iannelli, M.D.](#)

Insects (mosquitoes, gnats, chiggers, ticks, etc.) commonly bite children and can make them miserable. There are many safe and effective insect repellents that you can use to protect your child, including those that use deet, citronella, or soybean oil. Remember to only use products that are approved for children, follow the manufacturer's instructions and wash off the insect repellents when you return indoors.

Insect repellents with deet are probably the best and most commonly used. Although it is absorbed through your child's skin, it is generally safe as long as the product has less than 10% deet. You should apply the deet product to all exposed skin, except near the eyes, mouth, open cuts or hands of small children (who may rub their eyes or put their fingers in their mouth). Deet is absorbed through the skin, so you may want to limit how much you put on younger children, wash it off as soon as possible, and apply it more to clothing than skin.

Although deet insect repellents are effective for several hours, they do wash off with water and sweat, and you may have to reapply them to be most effective (follow the product's instructions to be safe).

Other insect repellents that are generally safe in children include those made with Citronella (Avon's Skin-So-Soft) and soybean oil (Bite Blocker).

Remember that insect repellents do not protect against most stinging insects, including wasps, bees and fire ants.

To keep your children safe from insect bites, you can also:

- Make sure to keep as much of her skin covered with clothing as possible, including long sleeve shirt, long pants, socks, and a hat.
- Wear light colored clothing, so as not to attract bugs.
- Avoid using any scented soaps or other products on your baby, since the fragrances can also attract insects.
- Apply insect repellents to clothing instead of to skin so that it won't be absorbed.
- Wash off insect repellents as soon as possible.
- Avoid areas with insects nest.
- Follow the instructions, including age restrictions on any insect repellent you are considering using.