



Poison Prevention Press

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The Critters of Summer

Safe Use of Insect Repellents

The best advice for using insect repellents safely is read the label. Some products can be applied to the skin, others to clothing. A few tips to remember:

- Use products containing no more than 10-30% DEET on children age 2-12 years. Higher concentrations can be dangerous.
- Apply sparingly to cover exposed skin only.
- Do not apply to the hands of a child or to broken skin and avoid eye and mouth area.
- Apply only as often as directed on the label. More frequent applications can be dangerous.
- Wash the skin with soap and water upon returning indoors.

Did you know that...

In 2008, the Maryland Poison Center managed 488 calls involving a bite or sting.

In 2008, the Maryland Poison Center received 138 calls involving insect repellents, 90 of which were in children under the age of 6 years.

Camps, cookouts, vacations, days at the pool or beach are all part of summertime fun. Unfortunately, we have to share the great outdoors with the critters of summer. Some are just a nuisance, while others can be downright dangerous.

In Maryland, there are two poisonous snakes...the Timber Rattlesnake and the Northern Copperhead. Both are pit vipers with triangular heads, elliptical pupils, fangs and pits between the nose and eyes. Rattles may or may not be present on the rattlesnake. Not all bites from these snakes will result in the injection of venom; this is called a dry bite. With dry bites, the puncture wounds will be apparent, but no symptoms develop. Pain, redness and progressive swelling are symptoms of a poisonous snake bite. Even non-venomous snakes have teeth and will bite. Proper first aid and tetanus update are required. If someone is bitten by a snake, remain calm and contact the Maryland Poison Center. The poison experts will ask questions that will help determine if additional medical treatment is necessary. Note that it is *not* recommended to use a tourniquet or try to remove the venom by cutting and sucking.



Maryland is also home to one poisonous spider. The Black Widow has a round, glossy black abdomen one-half inch in diameter with a red hourglass marking on its underside. The Black Widow is usually found in dark, quiet areas like wood piles. The bite may be painless or painful with redness and warmth at the site. Additional symptoms include muscle pain and cramps starting within two hours of the bite. Keep in mind that the Black Widow is usually not a deadly spider. The spider gets its name because sometimes the female will kill and eat the male black widow after mating. The Brown Recluse spider does not have a breeding population in Maryland, so bites from this spider are uncommon. This is a small brown spider that can fit on a quarter. There is a dark violin-shaped marking on its back. As its name implies, this spider is not aggressive. It is found in quiet places. Symptoms are usually limited to the site of the bite and include pain, redness and a "bull's eye" appearance that may progress to an ulcer. Other spiders will bite and cause local reactions that may become infected, but they are not poisonous.

Jellyfish stings can be quite painful. If stung by a jellyfish, immediately wash the area with seawater, and then apply a paste of baking soda and water. Scrape with a blunt edge like a credit card to remove any remaining tentacles. Wash again with seawater. Remember even a dead jellyfish lying on the sand can sting, so avoid touching the jellyfish that wash up on the beach.

Bites from ticks can result in Lyme Disease or Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. The symptoms of both begin a few days to a few weeks following the tick bite and include headache, chills, fever and a rash. Ticks should be removed using tweezers, grasping the tick close to the skin and pulling gently upward. Note the tick bite on a calendar and contact the physician if flu-like symptoms develop a few days to weeks after. The deer tick which causes Lyme Disease is about the size of the period at the end of this sentence and requires very close examination to find on the skin or in the hair.

For more information on bites and stings from the summertime critters, contact the Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.