



Zika Virus Underscores Importance of Guarding Against Mosquito Bites

The Zika virus is the latest global health emergency to make headlines. But even if you're never exposed to the virus, remember that mosquitos carry a range of diseases, including dengue fever and malaria. Mosquitos infect 7 million people annually and account for 2-3 million fatalities. It is important for outdoor workers to protect themselves, especially at dusk and dawn, when mosquitos are most active.

Dress for success: Cover as much skin as possible, wearing long-sleeved shirts, socks and pants. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spray clothes with repellent containing permethrin for extra protection. And avoid wearing perfume and cologne when working outdoors. They often attract mosquitos.

Choose the right repellent: Use insect repellents that are registered with the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and that contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535. Always follow label directions. Do not spray repellent on skin under clothing. If you are also using sunscreen, apply it before applying insect repellent. For extra protection, consider downloading an anti-mosquito app that emits ultrasonic frequencies designed to frighten mosquitoes away.

Eliminate standing water: Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitos. Avoid leaving containers that can accumulate water in an uncovered or upright position. That includes wheelbarrows, drums, buckets, cans, tarps and other containers. Drain or pump out collected water from newly constructed swimming pools, rain gutters and ditches. Create holes to drain water from containers that cannot be thrown out. Finally, fill potholes, patches and other areas where water is likely to accumulate.

Take extra precautions after heavy rains: Some mosquitos lay eggs above the waterline in ditches, ponds, tanks and other places where water collects. After floods or heavy rains, the eggs hatch, and in a few days produce swarms of aggressive, hungry mosquitoes. Another wave of mosquitoes typically occurs 10 to 14 days after the rain stops.

Attention employers: Health officials update their guidance as new information surfaces about Zika. For the latest tips, visit the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). If you send your employees to other parts of the world to work, check the CDC's [travel advisories](#) in advance.