

Are You a Mosquito Magnet?

By Seth Czarnecki

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As beautiful as summertime weather may be, the truth is that the warm weather brings a variety of annoyances-poisonous plants, fire ants, bees, and spiders, to name a few. One particular annoyance to many of us is the mosquito. Rare is it that you can enjoy a barbeque or outdoor party without one of these blood-thirsty critters taking a bite out of you.

Who's Attractive?

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Mosquitoes come equipped with three kinds of sensors: heat, visual, and chemical. Humans naturally give off heat, visual cues, and hundreds of chemical scents, all of which combines to an easy target for a hungry mosquito.

Here, some of the most common attractants:

Carbon dioxide, which we give off when we breathe.

Lactic acid, which is present on human skin and is excreted in large quantities after exercise. Mosquitoes can sense this up to 100 feet away.

Perfumes. Sweet smelling lotions and perfumes can attract insects.

Body heat. Mosquitoes can detect the heat in warm-blooded animals.

Color. Believe it or not, mosquitoes can detect contrast in color.

How to Avoid Insect Bites

Although there are some aspects you cannot hide, like being warm-blooded and excreting natural bodily hormones, there are steps you can take to avoid being bitten.

Avoid water. Because mosquitoes and horseflies lay eggs in or around bodies of water, try to keep your property free of standing water. If you have a swimming pool, use a pump to keep the water flowing and keep it covered when it's not in use.

Dress appropriately. When going outside for an extended period of time, try to wear long sleeves and pants. Also, wear light colors during the day and dark colors at night in order to avoid contrast.

Use repellent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends using insect repellents containing 50 percent of the chemical DEET.

Avoid strong scents. Skip the perfume or cologne. Try using unscented soaps when showering, too. Even though they're rinsed off, scented soap remains on your skin and attracts bugs.

Stay cool. The more you sweat and exert yourself, the stronger your natural scent becomes and the more attractive you become to mosquitoes. Refrain from exercise when outside, especially around dusk when it's prime feeding time.