



The presence of mosquitoes can sometimes be what makes or breaks a camping trip. Not only are their bites aggravatingly itchy, but they can also spread nasty diseases such as the Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and even Dengue fever!

I'm one of those people that mosquitoes just love. In fact, some people just produce more of certain chemicals which attract mosquitoes, and certain blood types are also more attractive to mosquitoes! Unfortunately, this isn't something you can avoid, but there are certain precautions you can take to try and stay bite-free when you're camping, touring or travelling. If you're looking for ways to prevent being eaten alive by mozzies this summer, or you live in a tropical climate, then read on for some of my best-kept secrets for avoiding mosquito bites.



During peak mozzie season, it's difficult to keep insects at bay. Image: Thermacell

What are mosquitoes attracted to?

- Chemicals on our skin, such as lactic acid.
- Blood type - type O blood (in particular).
- Dark coloured clothes - this is because dark colours absorb heat which attracts their heat sensors.
- Deodorants and perfumes - particularly floral scents.



You might not know that dark coloured clothing attracts mosquitoes! Image: Coleman Australia

How do I avoid mosquitoes at my campsite?

- Don't camp near stagnant water.
- Wetlands, waterholes, tidal creeks and mangroves are all mosquito havens.
- Avoid areas with no air movement.
- Keep away from long grass.
- Stay away from dark shady areas close to dense bushes.



Avoid mozzie breeding grounds, such as stagnant water. Image: Coleman Australia

I want to camp near the water, is there anything I can do?

- Avoid being outdoors at dusk and dawn when mozzies are most active.
- Use tropical strength (DEET) personal insect repellent.
- Natural repellents that contain sandalwood and citronella oils can be effective, but you may need to apply them more often and be more vigilant.



- Use bug zappers, or mosquito coils or citronella candles around your campsite – just make sure you are very careful to extinguish the candles when you're finished up for the night.
- If you are permitted to have a campfire, the smoke will also act as a deterrent.
- Wear lightweight long sleeve shirts and pants in lighter colours as they deflect heat.
- Sleep under mosquito nets, or use mesh screen rooms or domes for sleeping and eating.
- Repair any damaged tent mesh screens before you leave home using seam sealant or screen patches and keep these items in your repair kit just in case a tear happens on your trip.
- Treat the mesh on your swag, shelter, or tent with a residual insecticide like permethrin to repel mozzies from your shelter.



If near water, make sure you're covered up at dusk. Image: Coleman Australia

What if I am fishing?

- Wear pants and a long-sleeved top in lighter colours.
- Drape a neckerchief on your neck – this will shield your neck and also help prevent sunburn.
- Make sure you're wearing DEET repellent on exposed areas.
- Wear mosquito head nets to protect your face and neck.



If you're fishing, wear repellent or cover up your exposed skin to avoid bites! Image: Dometic Australia

How do I treat a mozzie bite?

- Most importantly, avoid scratching the bite as this will reduce the risk of infection.
- Apply a cold pack to the bite to reduce inflammation.
- Use a mozzie clicker to stop the itching – they really work!
- Apply anti-itch lotion gel such as ItchFix
- Tea tree or lavender essential oil (diluted in lotion/cream) may soothe the itch.
- You may choose to take an antihistamine.



Mosquito clickers are a great way to get rid of the itch. Image: Mozzigear

Are they mozzies or midges?

Midges (or otherwise known as sandflies) are not known for carrying diseases like mozzies, but if you do get bitten the bites can cause very strong reactions. If you scratch the bites,



they can resemble chickenpox and even leave scars if you're not careful.

Sandflies usually travel in a swarm, so in an instant, you can be bitten on all of the exposed parts of your body. The itch often flares up when you are warm, such as when you are under the covers at night time. This can be a pretty dreadful experience, so apply the same principles above to prevent being bitten by midges.



Is it a mozzie or a midge? Image: CSIROscope

Don't forget to mosquito-proof your home for summer

When the weather is warm, or if you live in a tropical climate year-round, there are a few steps that you can take to mosquito-proof your home

- Empty any containers, pipes, pots of stagnant water around your home, as these are a favourite breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Check that your rainwater tanks are sealed up.
- Avoid clutter in dark/shady corners.
- Repair any damaged fly screens to prevent them from sneaking into your home.
- If you're eating dinner or relaxing outside, then you can burn a citronella incense coil (which you can pop in a holder [here](#) to use it down to the last stub).
- You can also set up a few [lantern & mozzie zappers](#) (two in one device), which will add some extra light to your outdoor area and [zap mozzies](#) in their tracks. The great thing about these is that generally the mosquito zapper & light work independently which gives you some flexibility.



*A repeller device that sits on your table is a great way to prevent bites when entertaining.
Image: Thermacell*

Now that you know these secrets, you'll be ready for those mozzies!

Having now learnt a bit about how to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, hopefully, you'll be able to enjoy some outdoor activities in comfort and peace!

What do you do to fend off biting insects when you're out exploring?