

saliva is imbued with anti-clotting chemicals to keep the blood flowing, and an anaesthetic so you don't notice the deed until it's too late. It's mozzie spit that's the actual cause of allergic reactions to the 'bite'.

◦ The Attack Strategy

So how do we eradicate them? Mosquitoes have been on the planet for over 30 million years, so they must be doing something right, although they only live for four to eight weeks depending on the species.

The only non-chemical solution may be predators. Bats, dragonflies and geckos, among others, will eat adult mosquitoes, and dragonfly nymphs and fish will feast on them during their aquatic pre-adult period, lasting five to 14 days. The downside is in the nutritional guidelines — mosquitoes are not a substantial meal, so those higher up the food chain don't eat enough to defeat the masses. Mosquitoes make up less than one percent of the average diet for bats. Not enough to make a dent in the mozzie population.

Can we get in earlier and eliminate the breeding grounds? Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, so get rid of any standing water around your property. Fish ponds, pot plant feeders and pet watering bowls, are all a no go. So are puddles. This may not be a practical solution for Ho Chi Minh City in the wet season. Even in the dry season the abundance of canals and rivers offers far too much temptation for the pesky bloodsuckers.

How about bug zappers? Hundreds of them — in every household of every nation. Forget it. Scientific studies show that zappers actually attract more of the wee beasties. All you'll end up with is an expensive electricity bill. There's also no scientific evidence to suggest that ultrasonic devices work, so save your cash.

Here are a few tips on how you can treat the bite-slash-stab. Firstly, wash the area with soap and hot water. Don't scratch it, no matter how satisfying you think it could feel. You'll increase the chances of infection and scarring. Try calamine lotion, a paste of baking soda and water, commercial after-bite ammonia solutions, or an ice pack. Even more simple, stick a strip of adhesive tape over the bite, or suck on it through a drinking straw. The counter tension should alleviate the itch. For more serious cases a one percent hydrocortisone cream can do the trick. 

"Avoid perfume, aftershave, scented lotions, soaps, hair spray and deodorant. Stick with **eau de natural for less appeal to mosquitoes. Keep in mind the result may also be less appealing to humans"**

HOW TO STOP THE BITING

REPELLENT

DEET-based repellents work well in fighting off the blighters, but DEET is a harsh chemical. If smearing toxic substances on to your skin makes you nervous, catnip oil extract, citronella and eucalyptus oil (tiger balm) are the basis for the natural repellents on the market. They can also be used in candle form and do work, although have a fairly limited effectiveness

CAMOUFLAGE

Wear light clothing in colours that help you blend into the background. Mosquitoes hone in on colour contrasts as well as movement. Play statues. Stay still and hide. If they find you, run — mosquitoes prefer a steady target

PERMETHRIN

Treat your clothes with permethrin. The downside is the cost; unless you have a limited wardrobe to treat, this will set you back a small fortune. It will poison your cat, too. We're yet to find it commercially in the city

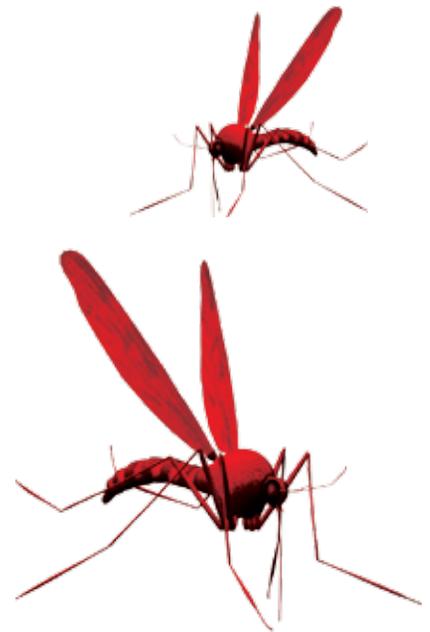
DON'T SMELL

Avoid perfume, aftershave, scented lotions, soaps, hair spray and deodorant. Stick with eau de natural for less appeal to mosquitoes. Keep in mind the result may also be less appealing to humans

TIMING

As with any creature with vampiric tendencies, peak feeding hours are from dusk until dawn. Stay home under your mosquito net

There are a few unproven remedies, such as ingesting vitamin B or garlic. While this can deter some biting insects, mosquitoes are not fazed. You'll just be seasoning yourself. For the Australians out there, this means vegemite is also not going to work



DID YOU KNOW?

Mosquito is Spanish for "little fly"

It takes on average three mosquito bites before someone will take action, like putting on repellent

In general, women are more attractive to mosquitoes than men due to different chemical makeup

Mosquitoes contributed to the deaths of nearly 27,000 workers during the building of the Panama Canal

The human-biting female mosquitoes need blood for the development of eggs. Most mozzies are vegetarian