

How to Deal with Ticks, Chiggers, and Mosquitoes: Simple Tips for Staying Bite-Free

Let's face it - nothing ruins a good day outside like getting attacked by tiny, biting bugs. Ticks, chiggers, and mosquitoes are some of the biggest party crashers in the yard, on a hike, or at the park. Aside from making you itch, some of these pests carry diseases. Luckily, there are plenty of straightforward ways to keep them in check and help you enjoy the outdoors with peace of mind.

Meet the Pests

Ticks are sneaky little arachnids (think cousins of spiders) that wait on tall grass or brush for a chance to hitch a ride on passing animals or humans. Once they latch on, they can be tough to spot. And some, like deer ticks, can spread Lyme disease and other nasty illnesses.

Chiggers are the tiny larval stage of certain mites. You probably will not see them, but you will know if they have bitten you: chigger bites are super itchy and usually show up as red bumps, often around your socks or waistband. Fortunately, chiggers are not known for spreading diseases in North America, but their bites can drive you crazy.

Mosquitoes need no introduction. These flying pests are everywhere in warm weather. Interestingly, it is only the females that bite as they need blood to lay eggs. Besides the itching, mosquitoes can transmit serious virus illnesses like West Nile, Zika, and more.

How to Protect Yourself (and Your Family)

- **Dress Smart:** Wear long sleeves, pants, and closed shoes if you are going into tall grass, woods, or brushy areas. Tuck your pants into your socks. Yes, it looks dorky, but it works!
- **Repellents Are Your Friend:** Use bug spray with DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on skin and clothing. For ticks and chiggers, you can treat your clothes and gear with permethrin (just do not spray it directly on your skin).
- **Check for Hitchhikers:** After coming in from outside, do a full-body tick check - scalp, behind knees, underarms, everywhere. Catching ticks early is the best way to prevent problems. If you find one, use fine-tipped tweezers to pull it out gently and clean the area.
- **Bathe and Change:** With chiggers, showering with hot, soapy water as soon as you are inside can help wash them away before they bite. Toss your clothes into the washer on hot.

Keep Your Yard Pest-Free

- **Cut the Grass:** Ticks and chiggers love tall grass and brush. Keep your lawn trimmed, get rid of leaf piles, and clear away weeds.
- **No Standing Water:** Mosquitoes need water to breed. Dump out water from buckets, toys, birdbaths, and gutters every few days to keep them from multiplying.
- **Block Entry Points:** Repair window screens and doors so mosquitoes cannot sneak indoors. If you camp or live in a high-mosquito area, consider sleeping under a mosquito net.

- Nature's Helpers: Invite bug-eaters like birds, bats, and dragonflies into your yard. They love to snack on mosquitoes and other pests.

<https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/acute-disease-service/tickborne-and-mosquitoborne-diseases.html>

Special Tips for Pets and Kids

Kids and pets are more likely to play in the grass and bring home unwanted guests. Check pets for ticks regularly and ask your vet about prevention. Teach kids to avoid tall grass and shower after being outside. Always use repellents as directed. Never use adult products on young children or pets.

Wrapping It Up

Ticks, chiggers, and mosquitoes might be a fact of outdoor life, but with a few simple steps, you can keep them from spoiling your fun. A little prevention goes a long way

- Dress smart
- Use insect repellent
- Keep your yard tidy
- Check yourself (and your furry friends) after spending time in nature.

That way, you can enjoy those backyard BBQs, hammock naps, and hikes without worrying about what might be biting.

<https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/common-ticks-of-oklahoma-and-tick-borne-diseases.html>