



# Managing Mosquitoes

## *Get Them Where They Live*

Most Tucson residents would agree that summertime is mosquito time in Pima County. It's true, but not for the reason most people think.

We tend to think of mosquitoes as a monsoon pest – and that our summer rains must start before mosquitoes become a problem. The truth is, all a female mosquito needs to breed is a male mosquito and a warm watery location to lay her eggs and allow the larvae to grow. Whether that water comes from the sky is not important to the mosquito, or to the larvae that will soon hatch and begin a new generation.

To prevent mosquitoes from breeding, the most effective action you can take is to deny them *any* standing water. This is known as Source Reduction, and should always be your first step in mosquito-proofing your property.

Residents or property managers should take the following steps to prevent mosquito breeding on their own property:

1. Destroy or dispose of tin cans, old tires, buckets, unused plastic swimming pools or other containers that collect and hold water.
2. Do not allow water to accumulate in the saucers of flowerpots or decorative ornaments, or to remain in pet dishes for more than 2 days.
3. Clean debris from rain gutters and remove any standing water under or around structures, or on flat roofs.
4. Check around faucets and air conditioner units and repair leaks or eliminate puddles that remain for several days.
5. Change the water in birdbaths and wading pools at least twice a week.
6. Fill or drain puddles, ditches and swampy areas, and either remove, drain or fill tree holes and stumps with mortar.
7. Check for trapped water in plastic or canvas tarps used to cover boats, pools, etc. Arrange the tarp to drain the water.
8. Irrigate carefully to prevent water from ponding, especially if the water can stand for several days.
9. Stock ornamental pools with top feeding predacious minnows, also known as mosquito fish.
10. Use a larvicide (larvae-killing) product containing Bti or insect growth regulator, available at local hardware and home improvement centers, to treat standing water that can't be removed.

By taking a careful look at your property, and removing any potential mosquito breeding sites, you'll help reduce the number of mosquitoes, and mosquito bites, that you and your neighborhood must endure this year.

**For More Information About Managing Mosquitoes, Call 740-3191  
Or Visit Our Web Site at [www.pimahealth.org](http://www.pimahealth.org)**



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## *Personal Protection*



Mosquito bites are often an itchy and annoying fact of life in the warmest months of the year. However, they can also be potential health threats, as mosquitoes can carry several diseases that can affect humans. This year, for the first time, they carry the potential to infect humans in Pima County with West Nile Virus. In most cases, West Nile Virus does not cause serious health problems, but in very rare instances, the virus can lead to debilitating illness, and even death.

Protection begins with eliminating standing water around your property where mosquito larvae can develop. There are also a number of additional steps you can take to prevent any existing mosquitoes from using you as a source of food.

### **Avoid Being Outside Between Dusk and Dawn**

Here in Tucson, most mosquitoes capable of transmitting West Nile Virus are most active from just after sunset until dawn. If you can avoid being outdoors at these times, you will decrease your chances of encountering mosquitoes.

### **Dress Sensibly**

During our long summer months, the most pleasant times to be outdoors are the cooler hours of the morning and evening. If you must be outdoors during these times, wear clothing that protects you from mosquitoes. This includes long sleeves, long pants, and shoes. Mosquitoes can bite through very light clothing so use a heavier cotton material.

### **Mosquito-Proof Your Home**

Some mosquitoes will come inside your home to bite. Use screens and close doors. If you have pets, check that pet doors close properly to help keep mosquitoes out.

### **Use Insect Repellents**

Most repellents don't kill mosquitoes, they just make a mosquito avoid biting you. Anyone working or playing outdoors during mosquito season should wear a repellent. The most effective repellents contain the chemical DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenamide). Extensive studies show that DEET, when applied according to the instructions on the product, is safe for use for all ages, although it is not always recommended for use on children below 2 years of age. Check with your child's healthcare provider.

There are few common sense rules to follow when using repellents:

- Apply repellent sparingly only to exposed skin or clothing.
- Keep repellents away from eyes, nostrils and lips and do not inhale or ingest them.
- Avoid use on the hands of younger children who might put them in their eyes or mouth.
- Don't apply repellents on wounds or irritated skin.
- Use repellent sparingly; follow the product instructions for reapplication times.
- Wash repellent-treated skin after coming indoors.

By being aware of the times that mosquitoes are most active and taking some simple precautions, you can help protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitoes.

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