INSECT BITE AVOIDANCE

FACT SHEET

KEY FACTS

- People who travel often get bitten by insects
- Some bites cause irritation, while others lead to allergic reactions or infections at the bite site
- Insects spread serious diseases like malaria, dengue, chikungunya, Zika and yellow fever
- Avoiding insect bites is a key measure to prevent infection, even for diseases where vaccines and preventive medicines exist

SYMPTOMS

- Pain, swelling, redness and itching at the bite site
- Some people may have severe allergic reactions, such as anaphylaxis
- For many diseases spread by insects, there is a delay between the bite and when the illness starts

PREVENTION

- Apply insect repellent on the skin
- Wear long clothes treated with insecticide or insect repellent
- Use insecticide-treated bed nets
- Stay in air-conditioned or screened places
- Spray insecticide in rooms or use plug-in devices
- Follow preventive measures around the clock as insects can bite during the day and night

TREATMENT

- Wash the bite area with soap and water
- Apply a cold compress (clean cloth soaked in cold water) or ice pack to reduce swelling
- Antihistamine and numbing creams might not help and can cause hypersensitivity.
- A short course of steroid cream may help.
- If the bite area gets more red, hot, painful, or starts leaking pus, seek medical help

MORE INFORMATION

Travelers are advised to check official health information from their own country, such as:

- Travel Health Pro, United Kingdom: https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance
- National Health Service, United Kingdom: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insect-bites-and-stings/

References


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