

How to keep mosquitoes away from your deck and home

By [Chaffin Mitchell](#), AccuWeather staff writer

While it may not be possible to shield your yard and home from mosquitoes completely, there are several techniques that can allow you to reduce their numbers dramatically.

"For your yard, you should drain standing water from containers such as buckets, bottles, cans, pool covers, flower pots, pet water bowls and clogged rain gutters," said Dr. Robert Peterson, professor of entomology vice president-elect, Entomological Society of America.

For containers such as pet water bowls, vases and bird baths, you should replace the water every few days. Also, you should fix any leaky outdoor pipes and faucets.

"If you have ponds or other water features on your property, you can apply [Mosquito Dunks® Insecticide] cakes or granules of *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (commonly just called BTI)] to manage the immature mosquitoes developing in water," Peterson said.

Strategically placed floor fans providing a breeze across the area of concern will serve to keep the mosquitoes at bay. According to Conlon, mosquitoes are weak fliers and will not be able to navigate properly against or within the air stream.

If you have a deck, light it using General Electric yellow "Bug Lights."

"These lights are not repellent, per se, but do not attract mosquitoes like incandescent white lights. In terms of keeping a deck or porch mosquito-free, it's quite easy," said Joseph Conlon, a technical adviser for the American Mosquito Control Association.

Mosquito repellency myths

"Bug zappers will attract many more mosquitoes to your yard than they kill (and they indiscriminately kill many beneficial and otherwise harmless insects). Ultrasonic repellents and vitamin/other nutritional supplements do not work," Peterson said.

Citronella candles have a mild repellent effect but do not offer significantly more protection than other candles, such as tiki torches, which produce smoke. They have a very small range of effectiveness away from the flame.

"Mosquito management in areas larger than your yard and house, such as your neighborhood or town, should be done by your community's dedicated public health professionals," Peterson said.

If you decide to spray control products for adult mosquitoes directly on vegetation around your home, Peterson recommends using a pest management professional for this type of treatment.

"They have the appropriate equipment and will ensure that risks to insects other than mosquitoes (such as bees) will be low," Peterson said.

Mosquitoes inside the home

To keep mosquitoes out of your home, ensure that window and door screens are intact and windows and doors are appropriately sealed around their edges.

Once inside, the only practical way to deal with them is to swat them or suck them up in a vacuum because they are relatively weak fliers, so a hand-held or other type of vacuum with an extender tube can work well.

"The best traps in a home are the warm-blooded occupants of the home, for example, you, your family and your pets. Female mosquitoes are exquisitely adapted to find you based on the carbon dioxide you breathe out, your body temperature and the odors you give off," Peterson said.

Experts suggest keeping repellents available such as DEET, picaridin and IR3535 as directed on their product packages.

According to Conlon, the other repellent, often the choice of those wanting a natural product, is oil of lemon-eucalyptus, sold as Repel. Repel is a 40 percent formulation of naturally-derived eucalyptus.

Catnip has been noted for years as possessing repellency against mosquitoes. However, only recently has its effectiveness been demonstrated to the EPA and therefore has not been registered by the EPA yet.

There are even clothes laced with insect repellent. These articles of clothing employ a process of putting permethrin, a mosquito repellent, into fabric that will retain its repellent factor through 70 wash cycles.

Keep in mind the level of repellency is only obtained in areas of little or no wind movement. Breezes will waft the repellent fraction away from the body, reducing repellent concentration and compromising repellency in the air column surrounding the body.

If possible, schedule your activities to avoid the times when mosquitoes are most active, which are usually around dawn and dusk.

"You should also dress in light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Close-weave is the best to prevent biting, but layered loose-weave works almost as well," Conlon said.