

## Natural Bug Bite Remedies

**Brigitte Mars**

*If you are spending a lot of time outdoors this summer, learn how to naturally combat a variety of bug bites naturally with these tips and tricks.*



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If you do not like to use chemicals on your body and would like to use a more natural approach, *The Natural First Aid Handbook* (Storey Publishing, 2017) by Brigitte Mars, is the book for you. Find herbal and homeopathic treatments for common conditions as well as tips to be prepared for emergency situations. These excerpts can be found in chapter 2, “An A-Z Guide to Ailments and Injuries.”

**Bug Bites**

Bug bites can make forays into nature perilous if they cause itching, stinging, swelling, redness, and irritation.

### **At-Home First Aid for Bug Bites**

Ants and bees. Treat ant bites topically with apple cider vinegar, green clay moistened with vinegar or water, cucumber juice, or a plantain leaf poultice. You can also try applying mud, lavender or tea tree essential oil, or a paste of baking soda and apple cider vinegar to help neutralize the formic acid in the bite.

Caterpillars and centipedes. When brushing off hairy caterpillars, do so from tail to head, or irritating hairs may remain in your skin. Apply lavender essential oil to their bites. Echinacea tincture can be used topically and internally (1 dropperful 3 or 4 times daily).

Mosquitoes. Apply mud, witch hazel, lemon juice, moistened vitamin C powder, apple cider vinegar, peppermint, a plantain leaf poultice, or lavender or tea tree essential oils to the bite.

Ticks. Brush them off clothing or flick them off skin. If they are attached, it's imperative that the ticks be removed without leaving their heads embedded in the skin. Do not traumatize the tick or squeeze its body in the center. Either use a tick scooper — a plastic device available from your vet — or sterile tweezers to grab the tick as close to the head as possible. Pull the tick straight out and use the tweezers to remove any part left in the wound. Afterward, wash the area and your hands well with antiseptic soap and water, dry, then apply a few drops of infection-fighting echinacea tincture or lavender or tea tree essential oil.

### **Ticks and Disease**

Ticks have been a cause for special concern in the past few years because of their ability to transmit Lyme disease. The longer an infected tick remains attached, the greater the chance for infection. Symptoms of Lyme disease, which can take from 2 days to 2 weeks to manifest, include arthritis-like symptoms such as achy joints, chills, rashes, facial palsy, headaches, swollen glands, fatigue, numbness, irregular heart rhythms, and a bite mark that resembles a bull's-eye. The longer Lyme disease remains undiagnosed, the more difficult it is to treat.

In addition, a tick pathogen, *Rickettsia rickettsii*, is known to cause Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which may appear 1 week after a tick bite, include intense headache, itching, a rash on the ankles and wrists, and fever.

As a precaution, if you are bitten by a tick, take 1 dropperful of echinacea or red root tincture 3 times daily for a few days to give the immune system a boost. You might also want to drink calendula and cleavers teas. Calendula is antiseptic and helps treat infections deep in the body, while cleavers reduces fever.

If despite your precautions, you suspect you have contracted Lyme disease or spotted fever, visit a health-care professional.

### **Follow-Up Care for Bug Bites**

If you have lots of itchy bites, any one of the following ingredients added to a warm bath may provide some relief:

- 1 cup (240 ml) apple cider vinegar
- 1 pound (454 g) baking soda (use half as much for children)
- 1 gallon (3.8 l) infused tea of peppermint, white oak bark, or cleavers
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) sea salt
- 1 cup (240 ml) cornstarch

### **Prevention of Bug Bites**

Mosquitoes and other insects are repelled by many natural substances. They include:

Homeopathic staphysagria. Taking 4 pellets dissolved under the tongue 4 times daily a few days prior to an outing may discourage mosquitoes from biting you.

Essential oils. A drop or two of cedarwood, citronella, lavender, or tea tree essential oils can be applied topically to pulse points such as the inside of the wrists, behind the knees, and behind the ears every hour or so to repel buzzing bombers. If you don't have essential oils, you may rub aromatic plants such as artemisia, lavender, or rosemary on your body. See Herbal Insect Repellent below, should you wish to make your own insect repellent blend.

Garlic. Taking a 500-mg garlic capsule 3 or 4 times a day will make you an unappetizing target for anything that bites.

Diet. Avoid large amounts of sugars, alcohol, and tropical fruits and juices when you know you're going to be outdoors. Some people feel that these items attract bugs.

Aromatherapy. Place a few drops of citronella, eucalyptus, geranium, lavender, rosemary, or tea tree essential oil in a diffuser to discourage flying insects. You can also mix a glass of water with about 30 drops of the oil to use as a room spray.

Tomato leaves. Hang a bouquet of dried tomato plant leaves in the room to repel mosquitoes.

### **Herbal Insect Repellent**

Instead of soaking your body with a potentially dangerous chemical, try this natural insect repellent that encourages insects to choose another target. You can make up a bottle before mosquito season and keep it handy in the refrigerator all summer long.

- 1/4 cup (60 ml) almond or sunflower oil
- 5 drops each of eucalyptus essential oil, lavender essential oil, tea tree essential oil, citronella essential oil, and rosemary essential oil

### **Comments**

Please make a distinction between caterpillars and centipedes. They're two completely different critters. Caterpillars are the larvae of butterflies and moths. They eat leaves. However, you are correct in that some cats have hairs that can irritate your skin or cause lingering pain. Centipedes can bite and their venom can cause local pain/irritation and possibly other allergic reactions throughout the body.

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i see no mention of the protein molecule that ticks are now carrying. it makes you allergic to meat from mammals such as beef. this condition can last for a decade, or a shorter period. the allergic reaction can be from mild to medium case of hives, to full on severe reaction.

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