

Mosquito Control: A lot of myths swarm around mosquitos

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With mosquito season fast approaching it is a good time to review some myths and facts related to mosquitoes and protecting oneself from their bite.



Myth:

Mosquitoes breed in tall grass. One version of this myth has it that they develop in the drops of dew on the grass. Although large numbers of adult mosquitoes may be found resting in grass and brush, they do not develop there.

Fact:

The mosquito life cycle starts with an egg deposited either on the surface of the water, on the soil where water may stand later in the year, or on the side of containers that may fill with water. The eggs deposited on the soil or in containers can remain there for months, even years, waiting for sufficient rain to submerge them so that they can hatch.

The eggs hatch into larvae, or wigglers, that feed on algae and small particles of organic matter suspended in the water in which they live. As the larvae grow they shed their skin, much like a snake. They molt three times, with the last molt leading to the pupal stage.

The mosquito pupa is similar to a butterfly's cocoon. The pupa is still active in the water but it does not feed while its body changes into an adult. The adult emerges from the pupal stage and is quickly ready to search out a blood meal. This process of development from egg to adult can take from five to 10 days here in southwest Florida.



Myth:

Both male and female mosquitoes feed on blood.

Fact:

Male mosquitoes do not feed on blood. They feed on plant juices and nectar, while the female is the blood sucker, needing the protein in blood to develop her eggs, and causes all the problems for people and animals.

**Myth:**

Eating garlic, eating different herbs, wearing electronic or ultrasonic devices, devices that mimic male mosquito or dragonfly wing beats, and any number of other folk remedies repel mosquitoes.

Fact:

The only truly effective mosquito repellent is DEET. This is the active ingredient in most of the major brands of commercial repellent.

In a very convoluted and round about way, there may be some substance to the myth that eating quantities of garlic repels mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide exhaled by people. The more people in a group, the more carbon dioxide and the more attractive to mosquitoes are the individual people in the group. In the case of someone eating a clove of garlic, no one will want to stand around outside with the garlic eater. Thusly, the garlic eater will be alone and less attractive to mosquitoes because there will be less carbon dioxide to attract the mosquitoes. The bottom line, garlic may repel people but not mosquitoes.

**Myth:**

Bug zappers will attract and kill all of the mosquitoes in a yard.

Fact:

These devices attract and kill thousands of inoffensive and beneficial insects, while killing very few mosquitoes. The savvy homeowner will invest in a screened porch or repellent, not a bug zapper.

What is the fact behind a couple of other mosquito myths and misconceptions? In a nutshell, mosquitoes do not transmit AIDS, and bats and purple martins do not effectively control mosquitoes.

For more information on what may or may not work, contact the Collier Mosquito Control District at the phone number below.



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