

IN-DEPTH GUIDE

Mosquitoes: the complete homeowner's guide

Everything a homeowner needs in one place, based on public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC, with links to every source.

PestGuardCo.com · To reach an independent local pest control company, call (855) 424-9709.

> Plain-language summary of public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC · Updated November 2026

Check these first

1. **Walk the yard after rain** and look for anything holding water.
2. **Check gutters**, buckets, plant saucers, tarps, kids' toys and old tires.
3. **Look at birdbaths and pet bowls**. Water left more than a few days can breed mosquitoes.
4. **Check rain barrels and water containers** for tight lids or screens.
5. **Check window and door screens** for holes.
6. **Notice when you get bitten**: dusk and dawn, or daytime too.

If you see this, it usually means...

IF YOU SEE

Bitten mostly at dusk and dawn

IT USUALLY MEANS

Common mosquitoes active at those times

NEXT STEP

Use repellent and cover up at those hours.

IF YOU SEE

Bitten during the day in shady spots

IT USUALLY MEANS

Day-biting mosquitoes breeding in small containers nearby

NEXT STEP

Empty every container of water, even small ones.

IF YOU SEE

Wriggling tiny larvae in standing water

IT USUALLY MEANS

Mosquitoes breeding right there

NEXT STEP

Dump the water and scrub the container.

IF YOU SEE

Mosquitoes indoors

IT USUALLY MEANS

Gaps in screens or doors left open

NEXT STEP

Repair screens and use air conditioning.

IF YOU SEE

Problem continues after emptying containers

IT USUALLY MEANS

Breeding in hidden spots or neighboring areas

NEXT STEP

Check gutters, drains and under decks; consider yard treatment.

How to tell what you have

Mosquito

Small, thin, long legs, a long biting mouthpart.

Females bite; larvae live in still water.

vs

Crane fly

Looks like a giant mosquito with very long legs.

Harmless. Doesn't bite.

SIZE

About 1/4 in.

COLOR

Gray-brown

WHERE

Shady yards, near water

WHEN

Warm months

Mosquitoes start in water

Mosquitoes lay eggs in or near standing water, and a small amount, such as a bottle cap or plant saucer, can be enough. Removing water is the most effective step you can take.

CDC suggests emptying and scrubbing, turning over, covering or throwing out items that hold water once a week, and tightly covering water storage containers. For containers without lids, use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.

Protect yourself

Use an EPA-registered insect repellent and follow the label. Wear loose-fitting long sleeves and pants, and consider clothing treated with permethrin.

Indoors, use air conditioning and keep window and door screens in good repair.

When yard treatment helps

If water can't be removed, such as storm drains, ornamental ponds or soggy spots, products that kill larvae in water can help. Treating shady plants where adults rest can reduce bites for a while.

Yard treatments work far better together with emptying water, not instead of it.

Know your local risk

Mosquitoes live throughout the continental U.S., and some spread germs such as West Nile virus. Local health departments often post alerts during outbreaks; follow their advice.

What to do and what to avoid

Do

- Once a week, empty, scrub, turn over, cover or throw out anything that holds water.
- Change water in birdbaths and pet bowls every few days.
- Clean gutters so water drains.
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent outdoors, following the label.
- Wear loose, long sleeves and pants at dusk and dawn.

Avoid

- × Don't rely on bug zappers. They kill many insects but don't do much against biting mosquitoes.
- × Don't use repellent on children younger than the label allows.
- × Don't leave containers, tarps or toys upside-up in the yard.
- × Don't use outdoor products indoors.

Health and safety

- Mosquito bites can spread germs that cause illnesses such as West Nile virus. CDC notes about 12 types of U.S. mosquitoes can spread germs.
- See a doctor for fever, headache, body aches or rash after mosquito bites, especially during local outbreaks.
- Use EPA-registered repellents and follow the label, especially for children.

Prevention checklist

- Do a weekly "tip and toss" of anything holding water.
- Cover rain barrels and water containers tightly or with fine mesh.
- Keep gutters clean and fix spots where water pools.
- Repair screens on windows and doors.
- Keep grass and shrubs trimmed to reduce resting spots.
- Use fans on porches; mosquitoes are weak fliers.

When to call a pro

Call a pro if bites continue after a few weeks of emptying water, or if your yard has drains, ponds or soggy spots you can't empty.

1

Yard inspection

Finding breeding spots you may have missed: drains, gutters, soggy dips, hidden containers.

2

Larvae control

Treating water that can't be emptied, such as drains or ornamental ponds.

3

Barrier treatment

Treating shady plants where adult mosquitoes rest.

4

Season plan

Repeat visits through the warm months, since new mosquitoes keep arriving.

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Questions

How small a puddle can breed mosquitoes?

Very small. Even water in a bottle cap, plant saucer or tarp fold can be enough, which is why a weekly check matters.

Do bug zappers work on mosquitoes?

Not well. They kill lots of other insects but few biting mosquitoes.

Why do I get bitten more than others?

Mosquitoes are drawn to body heat, breath and skin odors, which vary from person to person.

Do mosquito yard treatments last?

For a while. New mosquitoes keep arriving, so treatments are usually repeated through the warm months.

Sources

Prevent Mosquito and Tick Bites (Fight the Bite) (https://www.cdc.gov/fight-the-bite/prevent/index.html) **CDC**

Preventing Mosquito and Tick Bites: Key Points (https://www.cdc.gov/vector-borne-diseases/prevention/index.html) **CDC**

Got Pests? Control Them Safely (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/got-pests-control-them-safely) **U.S. EPA**

Do's and Don'ts of Pest Control (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/dos-and-donts-pest-control) **U.S. EPA**

This guide is PestGuard's own plain-language summary of public guidance from U.S. government agencies (EPA and CDC). U.S. federal government publications are generally in the public domain; follow the links to read the originals. It is general information, not an official government publication and not a substitute for an inspection. If you use any pest control product, read and follow the label. In an emergency, call 911. For pesticide questions, the National Pesticide Information Center can help: 1-800-858-7378.