

Mosquito Sensitivity

Mosquitoes inject salivary proteins into skin when they feed (bite into the skin). These proteins can cause an immune reaction which leads to a delayed inflammatory response causing a local swelling. These reactions can be very large and uncomfortable. Rarely, these proteins may generate synthesis of specific IgE antibodies, which can result in allergic reactions with repeat exposure. Mosquito sensitive individuals can experience continued swelling for four to six hours after a mosquito bite has occurred. This may persist for several days. Because histamine is an important mediator in these reactions, anti-histamines can help prevent most reactions. The best line of defense is to avoid the occurrence of mosquito bites. The following actions may help prevent or minimize the severity of a reaction:

1. Stay inside during dawn and dusk if possible.
2. Pre-treat with cetirizine (Zyrtec) or loratadine (Claritin) when outdoors for extended periods.
 - Adults (ages 6 and over): 10 mg per day
 - Children (ages 2-5): 5mg per day
3. Apply insect repellent on all exposed skin. CDC recommends 20-30% DEET concentrations, which provide approximately three hours of protection.
4. Cover arms and legs with long sleeves/pants.
5. Apply ice to a mosquito bite as soon as possible. Do not scratch bite.
6. May try OTC Hydrocortisone cream 1% twice daily to affected area (prescription strength topical steroid can also be prescribed if indicated).

If the swelling persists or worsens despite the above measures, contact your health care provider.