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## The Green Girl's Guide to natural buzz-killers

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Summer is just around the corner, and so are mosquitoes.

Our salt-marsh mosquitoes are among the most voracious of the entire mosquito clan, and their target is our tender, unprotected skin.



In the mid-20th century, Floridians started using a new chemical called DEET. Many of our everyday bug sprays still contain DEET, and it has proven to be a very effective repellent. When applied to the skin, however, DEET can enter the bloodstream. This may cause reactions in some people that include skin rashes, lethargy, muscle spasms, nausea and irritability. There has also been an ongoing debate whether DEET is safe for children.

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But why use chemicals that can harm us when there are natural sources to help protect us that are better for the environment?

Natural aromatic oils are one way to keep the buzz at bay. Pennyroyal, lemon balm (citronella), thyme or lavender oils have been used for hundreds of years to repel mosquitoes. Several of these can be found in repellent ingredients.

You can add any one of these oil bases to your clothes, skin, shampoo or soaps to help ward off pests. Also, several companies have created all-natural bug sprays in case you can't easily find lavender oil in your local grocery store. Remember: Oils should be used topically and never ingested.

Gaiam, a West Coast company, offers many natural insect sprays; it also offers options such as natural insect repellent wipes to minimize spray and inhalation. The company also sells a solar mosquito guard that emits a barely audible, high-frequency wave that repels some mosquito species (for more information visit [www.gaiam.com](http://www.gaiam.com)).

To minimize your risk of being bitten, don't wear perfume in a mosquito-infested area (which means nearly all of South Florida in the summer.)

Or, you can try a Native American remedy and light up. Not a cigarette, but small camp fires, tiki torches and candles work wonders for bug prevention.

So the next time you're about to douse your family in DEET bug spray, consider the ultimate buzz killer - Mother Nature - instead.

*Pine Jog does not endorse the products or companies listed. References are for information only.*

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