

In Good Health

www.nextlogical.com August 2010

DANGERS IN YOUR BACKYARD



You do not need to be wandering in the deep woods to be exposed to nature's dangers; your own backyard may contain quite a few of its own. Listed below are several of the most common backyard threats and suggestions on how to deal with them.

POISON IVY, OAK OR SUMAC

As soon as exposure is determined, immediately wash the exposed area with dish detergent. Apply the soap directly from the bottle to the exposed area; do NOT dilute the soap with water. This will remove urushiol, a nasty chemical in the plants oily sap, which causes the well known itchy rash and blisters. Once the rash and blisters appear, calamine lotion or an over-the-counter cortisone cream can be applied to ease the itching. Remember to wipe down pets' coats and wash any clothing that may have been exposed to the plants since urushiol is easily transmitted from surface to surface.

To prevent future problems, the plants listed above need to be identified and then removed by their roots. Never burn a patch of poison ivy, oak or sumac. When these plants are burned, the urushiol is released into the air, creating a very dangerous smoke for lungs, skin and eyes.

BEE STINGS

Quickly remove the bee's stinger by scraping the surface of the skin with the edge of a credit card or other straight edged object. The straight edge should remove the stinger; if not, try removing the stinger with a set of tweezers. Keep in mind that yellow jackets, wasps and hornets do not leave their stingers behind, so do not be alarmed if you cannot locate the stinger. For all bee stings, clean the wound with soap and water. Apply aloe vera or baking soda, mixed with a small amount of water, to ease the pain. If you develop hives, wheezing or your tongue starts to swell, call 911 immediately! These may be symptoms of a severe allergic reaction.

To prevent future problems, eliminate what attracted the bees. Keep garbage cans sealed and food and drinks covered. Always wipe up sticky spills since bees and yellow jackets are attracted to food, particularly those that are sweet.

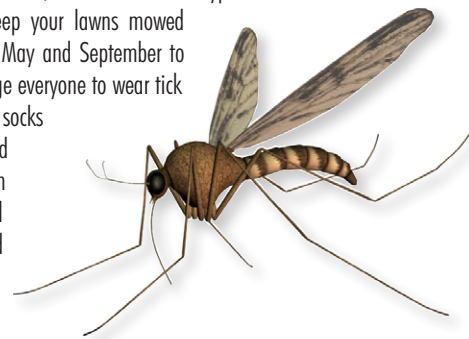
TICKS



Do head to toe checks for ticks on yourself and your family members as soon as you enter the house. Remember to check pets too. The removal of ticks within 24 hours of attachment significantly reduces the likelihood of Lyme disease infection. Remove the tick(s) by grasping the head of the tick with tweezers and

pulling it straight out. Ticks can carry many diseases besides Lyme disease, so anyone who has experienced a recent attachment needs to be monitored. The first symptoms of a tick-borne illness are a fever and headache, and they usually occur within a few days or weeks of exposure. If the fever, headache and general malaise do not resolve over time, visit your doctor to see if you need antibiotics. Your physician may have to draw blood to determine if you have acquired a tick-borne illness and/or to determine the type of transmitted disease.

To prevent future problems, keep your lawns mowed and consider spraying pesticide in May and September to kill larvae and adult ticks. Encourage everyone to wear tick repellent and tuck pant legs into socks while playing outside or doing yard work. Tick infestation is becoming an increasing problem in both rural and urban settings; living in a developed area is no longer a guarantee against ticks!



MOSQUITOES

Once bitten, dab on calamine lotion, anti-itch cream or a paste of baking soda and water to ease the itch. If itching and swelling persist, try an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream and an antihistamine, such as Benadryl. If you develop fever, headache, nausea or fatigue, see your doctor immediately as these reactions share symptoms with encephalitis or West Nile virus, both of which can be deadly.

To prevent future problems, get rid of all vessels holding standing water, including pet dishes, plant holders and open trash-cans. Mosquitoes breed in quiet, non-flowing water, and bug zappers and citronella candles are not completely effective. Repellents with DEET are safe and can be effective when properly applied, however do not use DEET containing products on babies less than 2 months old. You may want to alternate DEET containing repellents with repellents containing picaridin and lemon eucalyptus; these alternatives are equally effective even though they need to be reapplied more frequently. In addition, at your next get-together strategically place a fan or two in your backyard. This will significantly reduce the mosquito population because mosquitoes cannot fly in winds of more than 4 to 5 miles per hour. A gentle breeze will have multiple benefits!

BACKYARD BURDENS

In the short run, treat your immediate symptoms from backyard pests first. If the symptoms persist or worsen, see your doctor. In the long run, identify the source of the nuisance and safely eliminate it. It may be necessary for your safety to hire a professional who is trained and equipped to deal with the nuisance. Check your yellow pages for landscapers or pest control personnel who specialize in these types of problems. Also, talk to your neighbors! Many times your neighbors have already encountered these problems and have solutions to offer you.

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