

Stop bugging me!

Tips for soothing the stings of summer

by LOUISE GLEESON

Sorting through the heap of photos from our vacation on the east coast last summer, I was stumped by what looked like a close-up of one of my kids' limbs. Then I remembered our three-year-old son had been bitten several times by some kind of insect during a stroll through the brush. What I didn't know was that my husband had been worried enough about the angry, red bumps to snap a photo. Luckily, nothing came of the bites, but it's not always easy to know.

In rare cases, serious complications can arise from bug bites (see "When It's More Than a Bug Bite," p. 49). But for most kids, run-ins with bugs cause nothing more than minor discomfort and aren't reason enough to skip family hikes or playground time. Here are some tips for preventing, recognizing and treating bites and stings.

FLIES AND MOSQUITOES

Bugs that make a meal of our blood and leave their saliva behind include the blackfly, horsefly, deer fly and the dreaded mosquito. Though some of us especially attract these biters, there are ways to reduce the chances of being bitten.

Prevention Many things have been tried, but repellent (containing DEET or other Canadian-approved ingredients) is still the best way to keep mosquitoes at a distance, according to Robbin Lindsay, a Winnipeg research scientist with the Public Health Agency of Canada (see "The Dirt on DEET," p. 50).



BITE BACK! Bugs are a pain, but there's a lot you can do to help kids avoid them.

You can also curb the local insect population by removing stagnant water from areas where kids play:

Turn over backyard toys and wading pools, and clear out eavestroughs and gutters.