

How To Get Rid Of Mosquito Bites Fast

The best home remedies, according to dermatologists.



BY **KORIN MILLER** MAY 10, 2021



Spring weather means one thing: It's bug bite season. And when you have one, it can be hard to think about anything else—and you find yourself itching (heh) to learn how to get rid of mosquito bites fast.

For the record, it's true that scratching your bites can make them itchier. So, you really, really want to try your best to keep your hands off by implementing alternative relief methods. Luckily, you don't have to just suffer through this time of year in itchy hell—there are some home remedies that can help you ride out mosquito bite szn with as little discomfort as possible.

Here, dermatologists break down everything you never knew you needed to know about mosquito bites, plus how to get relief ASAP when those pesky bugs strike.

What even makes mosquito bites so itchy?

It's actually your body reacting to the mosquito, says board-certified dermatologist Ife J. Rodney, MD, founding director of [Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics](#) in Fulton, Maryland. "When mosquitos or other insects bite you, these insects inject their venom—or in the case of mosquitoes, their saliva—into your skin," she explains. "The bite triggers an immune response, sending allergic response cells including histamine to the affected area. This response is what makes those bites swell and itch so much."

The bite itself causes your blood vessels to dilate and release "inflammatory signals" in your skin, says Joshua Zeichner, MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. "This stimulates your nerves to tell your brain that the area itches," he says.

Of course, not everyone is bothered by mosquito bites and a lot of it comes down your body's own response to this kind of thing. "Some people release more histamine than others and that causes a more severe allergy," says [Gary Goldenberg, MD](#), assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

How long do mosquito bites last?

It depends. The saliva and venom can stay in your skin for a few days, but the itching, swelling, and inflammation can last longer, Dr. Rodney says. And yeah, Dr. Goldenberg says, it's true that the more you scratch it, the more it itches. "The scratching itself will cause your skin to release more histamine and inflammatory cells," he adds.

Your bite can change over time, too. They're usually "quite itchy" in the beginning, but the itching usually "subsides tremendously" over a few days to a week, Dr. Rodney says. Unless, of course, you keep on scratching—then, you're just drawing out your misery.

How can I get rid of a mosquito bite fast? What are the best remedies?

While not scratching your mosquito bites is clutch, there are a few different home remedies you can use for relief to make that easier. "The goal of treating bug bites is to maintain a healthy skin barrier and to reduce inflammation," Dr. Zeichner says. Try these options:

- **Ice.** The cold stuff can help decrease inflammation and swelling, Dr. Goldenberg says. Just a heads up, though, per Dr. Rodney: "Ice can help with the initial itch sensation but would not make the bite clear up quicker."
- **Hydrocortisone cream.** This "is like a fire extinguisher that puts out inflammation in the skin," Dr. Zeichner says, noting that it can help reduce redness, itch, and swelling.
- **Baking soda.** This can help dry out the bite and tamp down on inflammation, Dr. Goldenberg says. To use it, mix baking soda with a few drops of water to make a paste. Then, dab it on your bite.
- **Oatmeal.** "Oatmeal has soothing properties, which can help with reducing swelling and inflammation," Dr. Rodney says. Pro tip: Finely chop your oatmeal before cooking it (and dabbing it on) to make it easier to spread.
- **Toothpaste.** This solution is simple—just dab a little toothpaste on your bite and you're good to go. "The menthol and other cooling properties of toothpaste make it effective for redness and irritation," Dr. Rodney says.
- **Calamine lotion.** This lotion is beloved for helping with itchiness. "It decreases itching by decreasing inflammation," Dr. Goldenberg says.

How do you clean mosquito bites?

No matter how you treat them, it's a good idea to keep your bites clean. Dr. Goldenberg recommends gently washing them with soap and water. You can dab a little moisturizer on afterward to help protect your skin barrier, Dr. Rodney says.

And, of course, don't scratch. "Not only does it prolong the inflammation, but you can break your skin," Dr. Rodney says. "This then makes your skin more likely to get infected, and also results in discoloration and scarring. These scars can take months or longer to heal, and some may never completely resolve." So, she says, "moisturize it and leave it alone." Seriously.