

Midge facts

- Biting midges are not sandflies.
- They are not known to be vectors of any human disease in Australia.
- In overcast humid weather, they are known to bite all day and night.
- Only the female bites: she needs a blood meal to fertilise her eggs. They are known as pool feeders because they use their proboscis like a saw to create a tiny hole in the skin into which a pool of blood can flow. Saliva is injected into the pool to help the flow of blood. It is this saliva that causes the allergic reaction and itching.
- Remember that biting midge numbers increase around the time of the full and new moons; it is advisable not to plan outdoor functions that coincide with these times.

Useful tips

- a hot bath may provide temporary relief
- anti-itching creams or lotions (tea tree or lavender) can be effective
- it has been observed that Vitamin B1 (Thiamine Hydrochloride) taken over a period of more than 30 days before exposure to midges, can reduce the severity of some people's reaction to bites (this is not true of everyone and always consult your Gp, or the "HEALTH QUEEN" before taking any vitamins)

How to protect yourself

- Anything you can do to reduce humidity, increase light and air movement will make your house and garden less attractive to midges. Midges hide underneath the leaves of the plants and shrubs in your garden.
- Closely mown lawns, sparse vegetation around your house and minimal surface water in the garden will decrease humidity, increase air movement so as to minimise the resting places for midges.
- Avoid gardening or watering in the afternoon and early morning.
- Increase air movement in the house by using electric fans
- Spraying residual (surface) insecticide on your flyscreens will help deter midges from entering your home.
- Burning mosquito coils inside can also reduce numbers.
- Most insect repellents are effective against midges and should be used whenever you are outside the house, alternatively an equal part mixture of baby oil, Dettol and Eucalyptus oil is useful.
- Long sleeve shorts and long trousers made of closely woven materials give good protection; when gardening, a hat and gloves are also a big help.

Natural Organic insecticides

If you are reluctant to use chemicals in your garden, organic insecticides can be made up and applied. These will be capable of killing the adult midges, however repeated applications may be necessary.

Some useful organic insecticide formulations are:

Garlic spray : 85 grams unpeeled garlic, two (2) tablespoons mineral oil, 600 millilitres water and seven (7) grams of soap dissolved in solution. Mix solution and place in trigger sprayer.

Derris spray: 120 grams soap in 4.5 litres of water solution. Mix in 60 grams of derris powder (from garden suppliers) and mix an additional 4.5 litres of water. Dilute entire mixture in 12 litres of water and place in trigger sprayer.

Outdoor repellents: Gardening or hosting a barbecue? Paraffin oil or perfumed lamp oil can be mixed with either Citronella or Lavender oil and burned in 'Polynesian' bamboo lamp burners placed upwind of your activity.