

Family Saturday Guardian 19.04.08

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**Personal shopper Annalisa Barbieri**

My wife suffers badly from mosquito bites, which ruin her holidays. This year, she has agreed for us to take a trip to Italy if I can find her something that will protect her and all the children, from the mozzies. We now have three children, ranging in ages from eight months to nearly seven. Is there something we can all use that is effective but safe or do I need to buy separate lotions for the children? Ben, Hertfordshire

I really sympathise with your wife because I'm not very happy to be mosquito-bitten too. When it comes to repellents, it depends what you mean by "safe". The three main ingredients you will find in most commercially available, topically applied ones are DEET, IR3535 (more commonly known as picaridin or Icaridin) and 10-3535 (listed as products as ethyl hexanediol picaridin or 3-ethyl isocyanonopropionate). Everything that is sold in this country has been tested, but you are still applying chemicals, either on to your skin or into the air around you. The biggest worry seems to be reserved for formulations containing DEET (usually listed as dimethyl benzamide or diethyltoluamide). DEET is regarded as the most effective, because it leaves a thin film of it on the skin. However, there have been rare cases of children reacting to it. Also, be aware that DEET can react with synthetic leather and hard plastic so be particularly careful when applying it near watches, sunglasses or camera lenses.

I spoke to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), where they conduct tests of mosquito repellents, both in the laboratory and out in the field. One of the professors of medical entomology suggested that what might work for all of you is Mosi-guard, £5.59 (from independent chemists, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Masta travel clinics, [www.mosi-guard.com](http://www.mosi-guard.com)). This comes in a cream, stick or spray, is made from lemon eucalyptus and is suitable for babies from three months.

The minutes you get in Italy generally tend to be in daylight

these are usually incorporated with insecticide – pyrethroid again. Unincorporated ones are not recommended because you would have to be absolutely sure that there wasn't an ant or leg touching the net, through which the mosquito could bite, or that the net wasn't torn. If you want to go down this route, Lifesystems from Milton, 0800 319 5861, [www.lifetimes.co.uk](http://www.lifetimes.co.uk) has one in a neat little bag for £7.99. For £7.99 you can buy a Mosi-guard Net Hanging Kit, which allows you to hang a mosquito net anywhere. Both are small and light and good for travel – ideal for camps. Although mosquitoes can and do bite through clothing, they tend to prefer bare skin if it's available, so whatever product you go for, you need to apply it all over any exposed skin. Also, a really important point to remember is that, like sun lotion, the "effective for" promises on the bottles are a maximum time, so it's an idea to use a topical repellent – one you apply to your skin – when you are out and about and reapply regularly. I use a stick because they are smaller and easy to carry around. Masta & Spencer (0845 302 024, [www.mastandspencer.com](http://www.mastandspencer.com)) has DEET-free wipes, £3 they contain IR-3535, which you can slip into a pocket, but these only last up to three hours. They are handy if you get caught out without any other form of protection, though.

Products containing citronella have been shown to have some effect in tents, but don't last long at all – approximately two hours – and the one from Neal's Yard, £5.50 (0845 262 3445, [www.nealsonmedicals.com](http://www.nealsonmedicals.com)), isn't anyway recommended for children under two.

Please note that if you are travelling somewhere where there is malaria, follow the instructions of your GP and never rely on any repellent alone. The LSHTM also had this advice, which is to try to not scratch any bites (good luck), because this in itself leads to the secondary bacterial infections that then last ages. They recommended an ant, but not topical, antihistamine.

**Shopping problems**  
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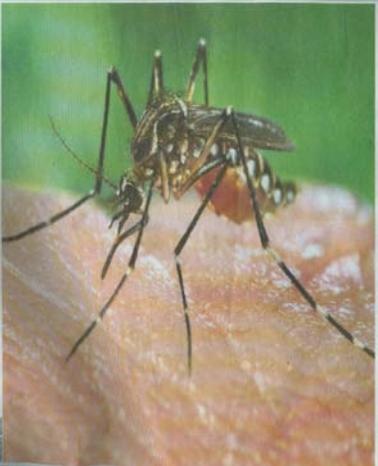
that is to say in the morning and evening, so it's an idea to be aware of this and reapply any repellent you use in the morning, if you want to be cautious. For night time, think about getting a plug in (Shoos sell them for £8.99 – remember to buy the two-pin version for Italy, or you can buy them locally). These have an insecticide (a pyrethroid) contained in a little bottle that sits into a holder in the plug and as it heats up it's diffused around the room. They are very effective (for what it's worth, I have never been bitten when I've used a plug in and there are any repellent of choice at night when I'm in Italy), and "very safe" according to the LSHTM.

You may also want to consider a mosquito net. However, be aware that

**Boots Repel plug in £8.99**

**Lifesystems net £3.99**

**Mosi-guard £5.59**





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10 HOUR PROTECTION

**NATURAL INSECT REPELLENT**

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