

Got Chigger's?

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Well I forgot my spray the last site visit I was on and I got a healthy batch of chiggers. So here is some good information to keep those itchy little buggers off of you. The best defense against chiggers is to avoid them! Well that's hard to do out in the yard or pasture so how about a little preventive medicine, you know an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! First, wear protective clothing, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and shoes or boots, when venturing into chigger habitats. Loose-fitting, tightly woven fabrics provide the best protection, because such fabrics minimize the movement of chiggers through clothing. To keep chiggers on the outside of your clothing, tuck pants legs inside boots, and button your cuffs and collar. Avoid sitting or lying directly on the ground. Remove your clothes as soon as possible after exposure to chigger habitats, and launder them before the next wearing. Take a warm, soapy shower or bath within a few hours after exposure to chiggers to reduce the number and severity of bites. Scrub your skin vigorously with a washcloth to dislodge any mites that may have settled there recently. The sooner you take a shower, the more likely it is to provide relief from skin reactions to chigger bites (chigger dermatitis).

Commercially available insect repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) offer protection from chiggers and insects. Apply repellents according to label directions. DEET may be applied to exposed skin and around the edge of openings in clothing, such as cuffs and waistbands, and around boot tops. Avoid getting DEET repellents around or in your eyes. Skin-applied repellents' effectiveness decreases after several hours, so reapply them as necessary. Sulfur powder applied to clothing also may provide some protection. Plant-oil-based repellents may not have been tested for effectiveness against chiggers; however, a repellent that specifically states it repels chiggers should provide some degree of protection. Apply products containing permethrin (such as Permanone® Tick Repellent) to clothing for long-lasting chigger protection. Do not apply permethrin sprays directly to skin; allow them to dry on clothing before wearing it. Permethrin treatments are long-lasting and will remain effective through several washings. Combine permethrin-treated clothing and DEET applied to the skin if you will be in areas heavily infested with chiggers.

Chigger infestations are less common in maintained turfgrass and landscaped environments. But occasionally, especially in sites recently cleared for development, chiggers may infest vegetation around a home. Also, hosts such as wild mammals, birds or reptiles can help sustain chiggers in backyard settings. Keeping grass cut short and vegetation well-trimmed can raise soil temperatures and lower humidity enough to make lawns less hospitable to chiggers.

Residual insecticide sprays, such as those containing bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, esfenvalerate or permethrin, can help suppress chigger numbers. Granular insecticides generally are less effective than sprays; however, among granular products, bifenthrin performed best against chiggers in recent studies. Use hose-end spray applicators to apply liquid insecticide sprays to large lawn areas. Make sure the insecticide product you purchase is labeled for use on lawns, and carefully follow label directions. When applying insecticides to your lawn, wear long pants, shoes and any other protective gear recommended on the product. As a general rule, pets should be removed from the yard during treatment but can be returned after spray residues are dry. Don't let those dang chiggers keep you from enjoying your yard and the outdoors. Show them who is the boss!