

Mosquito Facts

Why do mosquitoes drink blood?

Only female mosquitoes take blood. They use the protein and iron found in blood to make their eggs. Females feed on nectar and water, just like males do.

How much blood does a female mosquito “drink” per bite?

Female mosquitoes “drink” about 3 millionths of a liter, or 3 milligrams, of blood.

How do you tell male from female mosquitoes?

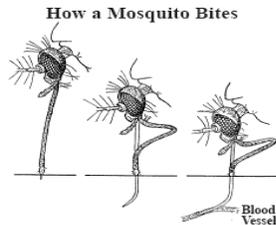
The easiest way is to look at the antennae. Male mosquitoes have very feathery antennae. They help sense female mosquitoes high-pitched wingbeats (300-500 bps).



Female mosquitoes have very plain antennae sparsely covered in small hairs.

Why do mosquito bites itch?

Mosquito saliva contains several enzymes and proteins that affect the body's clotting ability. Most people are allergic to these enzymes. The itch and bump is our allergic response to them.



How do mosquitoes find prey?

Mosquitoes use a range of signals to find their hosts, including movement, odor, carbon dioxide, and body heat.

Do all mosquitoes suck human blood?

Only a small number of mosquitoes feed primarily on humans. Mosquitoes usually feed on birds, a wide range of mammals, and even amphibians and reptiles. Mosquitoes in the genus *Toxorhynchites* (toxo-rin-kite-ees) do not feed on blood at all. Females use nectar to make their eggs.

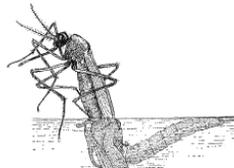
How far can mosquitoes fly?

Most mosquitoes stay within 1-2 miles of their larval (breeding) habitat, but some can fly 20 miles away!

What is the mosquito life cycle?

First, eggs hatch into larvae. They live in the water and feed on algae and bacteria. After the larvae are fully developed, they metamorphose into pupae. Pupae do not eat at all. Larvae and pupae live in the water, but they breathe air. Next, adult mosquitoes emerge, or “hatch,” from the pupae and rest on the surface of the water before flying away.

Emergence of an Adult Mosquito



How long do mosquitoes live?

In nature, female mosquitoes can live for a few weeks and males usually live for about a week. Life span depends on temperature, humidity and time of year.

How much does a mosquito weigh?

About 2 to 2.5 milligrams for medium size mosquitoes.

What do mosquitoes do in winter?

Some species of mosquitoes can survive the winter. The mosquitoes can sense when the days are getting shorter and enter diapause. Diapause is a hibernation-like state that allows them to live off fat stores. Adult mosquitoes find warm places to stay, like sewer drains, so they do not freeze. Females do not take blood or reproduce during this time. Mosquitoes in diapause can live for several months!

How many mosquito species are there?

There are about 2,700 species worldwide, about 175 species in North America, and about 60 species in Illinois.

Can mosquitoes carry HIV or hepatitis?

No. Mosquitoes carry viruses and pathogens in their salivary glands. In HIV and hepatitis, the virus does not replicate in the salivary glands, so it cannot be injected into the next host.

How many people die from mosquito-borne diseases per year?

Worldwide estimates range from 1-2 million people per year. The most common disease is malaria. A single malarial mosquito can infect more than 100 people.

How common is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is found in over 60 mosquito species and over 200 vertebrates. The virus usually cycles between *Culex* (cue-lex) mosquito species and common urban birds like American robins, northern cardinals, and house sparrows.