GENERAL

how to get rid of midges

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How to Get Rid of Midges: A Complete Guide to Midge Control

Midges may be tiny, but their presence can turn a pleasant outdoor gathering into an itchy, uncomfortable ordeal. These small, mosquito like insects swarm around humans and animals, leaving behind itchy bites that can cause allergic reactions and skin irritation. Whether you're dealing with a sudden midge swarm in your backyard or a persistent infestation in a rural area, knowing how to get rid of midges is essential for protecting your family, pets, and peace of mind.

In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through everything you need to know: from identifying the different types of midges to implementing both natural and commercial solutions. We'll also share expert tips on preventing future outbreaks and creating an environment that discourages midge activity. By the end of this article, you'll have a clear, step by step plan to keep midges at bay and enjoy your outdoor spaces again.

What Are Midges?

Midges, also called biting midges or no-see ums, belong to the family *Ceratopogonidae*. These insects are typically less than 5 mm in length and have a slender body with long, delicate wings. Despite their size, they can be surprisingly persistent and are known for their painful bites. Some species are harmless, while others can transmit diseases to humans, livestock, and wildlife.

Common Types of Midges

- Woolly Bear Midge (Polypedilum vanderplanki) – Found in arid regions; not a biting species.
- Common Biting Midge (Culicoides spp.) – Small, dark, and notorious for biting humans and animals.
- River Midges (Chironomidae) – Non-biting, but their larvae can create nuisance swarms.
- Swamp Midges (Aedes spp.) – Often found near standing water; some species bite.

Understanding the specific type of midge you're dealing with can help tailor your control strategy. For example, biting midges thrive in moist, shaded environments, while non-biting species are more associated with dry, sandy soils.

Why Midges Are a Problem

Midges can cause a range of problems, from simple discomfort to more serious health concerns:

- Skin Irritation and Allergic Reactions – Bites can leave itchy welts that may become infected if scratched.
- Transmission of Diseases – Certain midges can carry pathogens such as Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease in livestock.
- Reduced Outdoor Activity – Swarms can deter families from picnicking, fishing, or camping.
- Economic Impact – In rural areas, midges can affect livestock health and reduce tourism revenue.

Signs You Have a Midge Infestation

Spotting a midge problem early can save you time and effort. Look for the following indicators:

1. Sudden increase in small insects around outdoor areas.

2. Visible bites on skin after outdoor activities.
3. Swarming behavior near bodies of water or damp vegetation.
4. Presence of larvae or pupae in moist soil or standing water.

Once you confirm the presence of midges, you can start implementing control measures. Below is a step by step guide on how to get rid of midges effectively.

Step 1: Identify the Source

Before you can eliminate midges, you need to locate their breeding sites. Most biting midges prefer:

- Stagnant or slowly moving water such as ponds, ditches, or puddles.
- Shaded, moist vegetation.
- Areas with organic debris or decaying matter.

Inspect your property, especially around:

- Garden beds and compost piles.
- Drainage systems and gutters.
- Wood piles, mulch, and leaf litter.

Once you find the source, you can start eliminating it.

Step 2: Remove Breeding Sites

Eliminating breeding sites is the most effective way to reduce midge populations. Here are proven methods:

Drain Standing Water

- Empty ponds, birdbaths, and kiddie pools.
- Use a submersible pump to remove water from ditches.
- Cover shallow water bodies with floating debris or shade cloth.

Improve Drainage

- Install or repair gutters and downspouts.
- Use French drains or gravel beds to redirect water.
- Ensure lawn slopes away from the house to prevent puddles.

Reduce Organic Debris

- Remove fallen leaves, dead plants, and mulch piles.
- Use a compost bin with a tight lid to prevent midge access.
- Keep lawn grass trimmed to reduce shade.

Step 3: Use Physical Barriers

Physical barriers can prevent midges from reaching you and your pets. Here are some easy-to implement options:

- Mesh Screens – Install fine mesh on windows, doors, and vents.
- Netting – Use lightweight netting around patios and outdoor seating.
- Windbreaks – Plant tall shrubs or install screens to reduce wind flow, as midges are weak fliers.

While these barriers are effective, they are most useful in combination with other control methods.

Step 4: Natural Repellents and Plant-Based Solutions

Plants with strong scents or specific chemical compounds can deter midges. Consider planting the following around your yard:

- Lavender – Its floral aroma masks human scent.
- Citronella – Commonly used in candles and oils.
- Rosemary – A hardy herb that can be grown in pots.
- Marigold – Contains pyrethrum, a natural insecticide.
- Eucalyptus – Its oil is a powerful repellent.

Use essential oils like citronella or eucalyptus in diffusers, or add a few drops to a spray bottle with water and a splash of dish soap. Spritz around seating areas, pathways, and near windows.

Step 5: DIY Midge Traps

Building homemade traps is a cost effective way to reduce midge numbers. Below are two popular designs:

Carbon Dioxide Trap

1. Fill a 2 gal bucket with warm water and add 1 /cup of sugar.
2. Place a small fan in a hole in the lid to draw in midges.
3. Position the bucket near the midge breeding site.
4. Check and refill daily.

Midges are attracted to the CO , and warmth, then get trapped in the bucket.

Light Trap with a Fan

1. Attach a small LED light to a fan.
2. Place the assembly near a midge swarm.
3. Midges are attracted to the light, then the fan pulls them into a container.
4. Empty the container regularly.

Both traps can be set up in minutes and require minimal maintenance.

Step 6: Chemical Control Options

When natural methods aren’t enough, chemical control can be used as a last resort. Always read labels and follow safety guidelines.

Larvicides

- Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (Bti) – A bacterium that targets midge larvae.
- Apply to standing water or soil using a sprayer.
- Works best in shallow, stagnant water.

Adulticides

- Use EPA approved insecticidal sprays labeled for biting midges.
- Apply to vegetation, shrubs, and other resting sites.
- Follow label instructions for safety and efficacy.

Note: Chemical controls should be used sparingly and only when necessary to protect beneficial insects and the environment.

Step 7: Professional Pest Management

If midges persist despite your efforts, consider hiring a professional pest control service. Professionals can:

- Conduct a thorough inspection to locate hidden breeding sites.
- Apply targeted chemical treatments safely.
- Provide long term management plans, including follow up visits.
- Educate you on preventive measures to avoid future infestations.

Professional services often use more potent treatments and advanced equipment that are not available to the general public.

Seasonal Tips for Midge Management

Midges are most active in warm, humid months. Tailor your control strategy to the season:

- Spring: Inspect for breeding sites before temperatures rise. Remove standing water and clean up debris.
- Summer: Use repellents and traps daily. Keep outdoor areas well ventilated.
- Fall: Clear leaf litter and mulch. Inspect for any remaining breeding sites.
- Winter: Most midge species are dormant, but keep an eye on any persistent larvae in cold, moist soils.

Preventing Midge Reinfestation

Once you've reduced midge numbers, maintaining a midge free environment is crucial. Here are some long term prevention strategies:

- Maintain proper drainage around the property.
- Regularly clean gutters and remove debris.
- Keep lawn grass trimmed and remove leaf litter.
- Use natural repellents like citronella candles during outdoor gatherings.
- Plant midge repellent plants around the perimeter of your yard.
- Check for new standing water after heavy rains.

When to Seek Medical Attention

While most midge bites are harmless, some individuals may experience severe reactions. Seek medical help if:

- You develop a high fever or chills.
- Swelling or pain worsens over time.
- You notice signs of infection, such as pus or increasing redness.
- You have a history of allergic reactions to insect bites.

Conclusion

Getting rid of midges involves a combination of identifying breeding sites, removing sources of moisture, employing physical barriers, and using natural or chemical controls. By following the steps outlined above—especially those focused on prevention—you can significantly reduce midge populations and protect your family from bites and discomfort. Remember that consistency is key: regular maintenance, seasonal checks, and the use of repellent plants will keep midges at

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