

Biting Midge

Midge do not carry diseases to humans. But there are a number of things you can do to protect against biting midge.

Biting midges

Biting midges do not transmit diseases to humans, however they are a common nuisance along the coast of Australia.

What are biting midges?

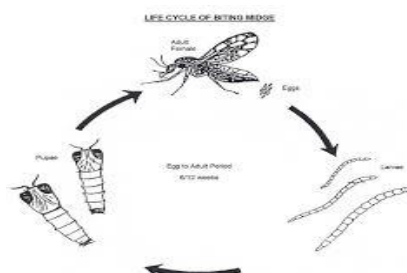
Like mosquitoes, only females midges bite and require a blood meal to fertilise their eggs. They are attracted to human habitation resting on screens, fences and vegetation while waiting to take a blood meal. As the biting midge is small and easily blown about by prevailing winds, they prefer dull still days with high humidity when seeking a meal.

A number of species of Biting Midge have been identified as being present on the Sunshine Coast of which there are four species that are pests to residents and visitors alike.

- *Culicodes subimmaculatus*
- *Culicoides molestus*
- *Culicoides marmoratus*
- *Lasiohelia*

Life cycle:

The majority of midge species share a similar life cycle involving four developmental stages. These consist of an egg (which lasts for 5.5 days), four larval instars (18 days), pupa (3.5 days) and adult stage



Biting midges present on the Sunshine Coast are particularly active during the warmer months of September through to April. Biting midges are more active around dawn and dusk and most prevalent in suburbs close to mangroves and inter-tidal zones.

Personal protection and care:

Outside:

Midges prefer humid overcast conditions with minimal air movement so anything you can do to reduce humidity, increase light and air movement will make your house and garden less attractive to midges. 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. Also avoid gardening or watering in the afternoon and early morning during peak feeding times

Inside:

Biting midges can penetrate ordinary flyscreens and during peak infestations, midges have been known to enter houses looking for blood meals. Increase in air movement in the house by using electric fans can effectively create an area unsuitable for biting midges as their activity reduces in wind speeds over 6-8 km/hr. Spraying residual (surface) insecticide on your flyscreens will help midges from entering your home and burning mosquito coils inside can also reduce numbers

Repellents:

Most insect repellents are effective against midges and should be used whenever you are outside the house. For those who find repellents irritating an equal part mixture of baby oil, Dettol and eucalyptus oil is useful. Alternatively, long sleeves and long trousers made of closely woven materials give good protection as well as wearing a hat and gloves if gardening

Other Options:

Biting midges are amongst one of the most complicated pest species to control and cannot be eradicated. In comparison to mosquitoes, poisoning midges does not work due to their required habitats and life cycle. The larvae of midges exist in mud and sandy substrates which makes treatment near impossible whereas the mosquitoes breed in water pools. There is currently no registered larvicide for biting midges, as the larvae occur in environmentally sensitive areas of the inter-tidal zone and dispersal patterns are poorly known. Insecticide applications against adult midges is the only option available, however this method provides only short-term relief and repeated applications are necessary. Bistar* chemical treatment is available and may reduce midge populations. Application of the chemical treatment Bistar* should be carried out only by pest management technicians. The chemical is only effective through the correct application to surfaces

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