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Do Mosquitoes Prefer Blondes?

After I enjoyed a "juice to the elbow" peach, I then enjoyed the fireworks display, and then the mosquitoes enjoyed biting me. The mosquitoes are bad this year, and going to be even more numerous because of the flood waters. Traps monitored by the County Emergency directors are keeping an eye on them. Here's some information I gathered online:

"1 in 10 people are highly attractive to mosquitoes," Jerry Butler, Ph.D., professor emeritus at the University of Florida. Another estimate from the research suggests more than 20 percent or one in five people -- are mosquito magnets.

It is definitely true that some people are more attractive to the pesky insects than others, but the reason *why* remains a bit of a mystery. There are a lot of myths out there, including the assertion that mosquitoes prefer *blondes*. In reality, mosquito preference doesn't seem to have anything to do with hair color, blood sugar levels, floral perfumes or many of the other factors we've heard rumors about.

"Different species have different cues for being attracted," says Janet McAllister, Ph.D., an entomologist in the Division of Vector-Born Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While scientists don't know *exactly* what attracts female mosquitoes to some and not others -- it's worth noting that male mosquitoes don't feed on human blood -- there are some observed patterns. Here are a few signs you might be a prime target for the blood suckers!

Bigger people produce more carbon dioxide and if there's one thing that will lure a mosquito from a great distance, it's a big cloud of CO2. This is why adults tend to get bitten more than children and why men are more likely to be a feeding site than their female companions.

Mosquitoes find lactic acid alluring and if you've just worked out, chances are you've got some building up in your muscles. What's more, the exertion could cause heavier and quicker breathing, another way to build up some carbon dioxide around you.

Mosquitoes enjoy a bit of cholesterol in their meals. People who metabolize cholesterol quickly -- *not* those who have higher cholesterol blood levels -- may attract mosquitoes because byproducts of that metabolization are present on the skin.

Acetone and estradiol released in your breath and many of the compounds and bacteria found on your skin contribute to your attractiveness. Scientists believe

that some people may give off stronger scents than others, even though everyone produces these compounds. A report on NBC:

It could be that individuals who get less bites produce chemicals on their skin that make them more repellant and cover up smells that mosquitoes find attractive.

What we *do* know is that there isn't much you can do about it -- besides using an EPA-approved mosquito repellant and covering up.