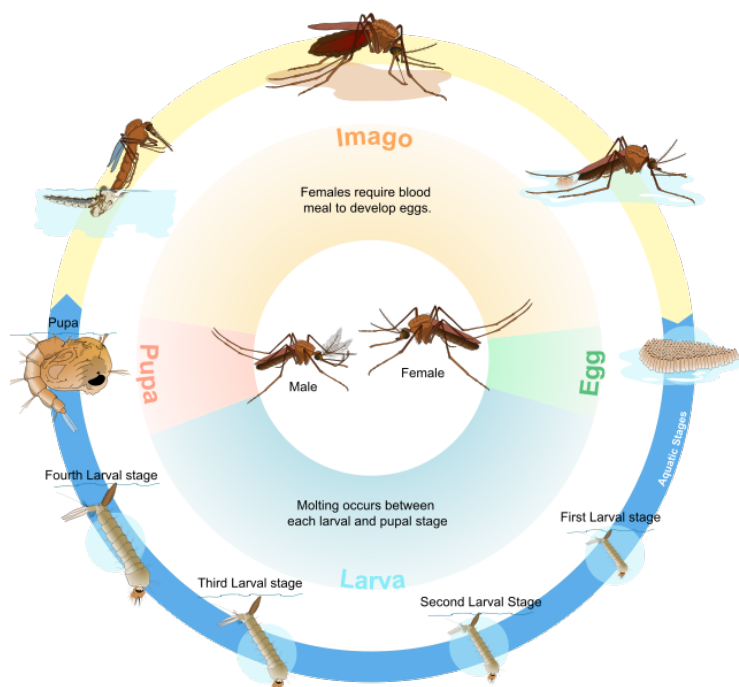


## Fun Facts about Mosquitoes

Ah, mosquitoes, the insects that are universally hated the world over. These pesky, disease-carrying pests make a living by sucking the blood out of just about anything that moves, including us. But take a moment to look at things from the mosquito's perspective – it's a pretty interesting life.

1. The word “mosquito” is **derived from Spanish and means “little fly”**. Mosquitoes are in fact a type of fly, belonging to the order Diptera (“true flies” or “two-winged flies”). The word reportedly originated in the early 16th century. In Africa, mosquitoes are called “Mozzies”.
2. Mosquitoes are known from as far back as the **Triassic Period – 400 million years ago**.
3. There are **about 3000 species** of mosquito but only 12 endemic species in New Zealand.
4. The average mosquito **weighs about 2.5 milligrams**.
5. **Except in Polar Regions like Antarctica, mosquitoes are widely distributed across all the continents**. The ideal temperatures for these species are warm and temperate when mosquitoes are found to move around the whole year. Extreme hot and extreme cold are the most unsuitable conditions for them to move on, however, bear subzero temperatures.
6. The majority of the female mosquito species **lay around 10 to 200 eggs**
7. **All mosquitoes require water to breed**. Some species can breed in puddles left after a rainstorm. Just a few inches of water is all it takes for a female to deposit her eggs. Tiny mosquito larva develop quickly in bird baths, roof gutters, and old tyres. Unlike larvae, the pupa does not eat during the stage of swimming or hanging down.



8. **An adult mosquito may live 2-6 months.** Few probably make it that long, given our tendency to slap them silly when they land on us. But in the right circumstances, an adult mosquito has quite a long life expectancy.

9. **Mosquitoes hibernate.** They are cold-blooded and prefer temperatures over 80 degrees. At temperatures less than 50 degrees, they shut down for the winter. The adult females of some species find holes where they wait for warmer weather, while others lay their eggs in freezing water and die. The eggs keep until the temperatures rise, and they can hatch.



10. **Mosquitoes don't have teeth.** The females "bite" with a long, pointed mouthpart called a proboscis. They use the serrated proboscis to pierce the skin and locate a capillary, then draw blood through one of two tubes.

11. **A mosquito can drink up to three times its weight in blood** during feeding. Don't worry, though, this is about a 5-millionths of a liter of blood. It would take about 1.2 million bites to drain all the blood from your body.

12. One of the most common mosquito's **predator are dragonflies** , which is adept to eat mosquitoes at all phases of its lifecycle, **and a fish called Gambusia**. Bats have only 1% of their diet composed of insects and more importantly, mosquitoes.

13. If you've **been bitten by a mosquito, it was a female** because they need a blood meal before they can lay eggs. Since males don't bear the burden of producing young, they'll avoid you completely and head for the flowers instead. And when not trying to produce eggs, females are happy to stick to nectar, too.



14. **Some mosquitoes don't bite humans, or don't bite at all.** Not all mosquito species feed on people. Some mosquitoes specialize on other animals, such as amphibians or birds, and are no bother to us at all. Some species have predatory larvae, which gain enough proteins during their larval hood. The females don't need any blood meal as an adult.

15. **Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide**, lactic acid and octenol found in our breath and sweat. They may have a preference for beer drinkers.

16. **Mosquitoes can sense carbon dioxide up to at distances of 25 to 35 meters.**

Since human beings exhale carbon dioxide through the nose and mouth, mosquitoes are attracted to our heads, perhaps leading to more incidents of “self-slapping while sleeping” than any other cause. Bigger people are often more attractive to mosquitoes because they are larger targets and they produce more mosquito attractants, namely CO<sub>2</sub> and lactic acid. Active people also produce more CO<sub>2</sub>.

17. **Smelly feet are attractive** to certain species of mosquitoes – as is Limburger Cheese. and lactic acid.



18. **The smell of chocolate confuses them.** The carbon dioxide we exhale excites and attracts mosquitoes, which is a bummer

since we can't exactly stop breathing to prevent their stealthy attacks. But researchers have found that certain scents – some of them minty, some fruity, and some that smell like caramelized chocolate – can stun the buzzing bugs' carbon dioxide sensors, thus making it harder to find their next dinner.



19. **Dark clothing** has been shown to attract some species of mosquitoes more than lighter colored clothing.

20. Mosquitoes fly an estimated **1 to 1.5 miles per hour**. That might sound fast, but in the insect world, mosquitoes are actually rather slow. If a race were held between all the flying

insects, even butterflies would finish well ahead of the skeeter.

21. **A mosquito's wings beat 300-600 times per second.** This would explain that irritating buzzing sound you hear just before a mosquito lands on you and bites.

22. **Mosquito mates synchronize their wing beats to perform a lover's duet.** Scientists once thought that only male mosquitoes could hear the wing beats of their potential mates, but recent research on *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes proved females listen for lovers, too. When the male and female meet, their buzzing synchronizes to the same speed.

23. **Salt marsh mosquitoes may travel up to 100 miles from their larval breeding habitat.** Most mosquitoes emerge from their watery breeding ground and stay pretty close to home. But some, like the salt marsh mosquitoes, will fly lengthy distances to find a suitable place to live, with all the nectar and blood they could want to drink.

24. **Mosquitoes generally fly below 25 feet.** However, some species have also been found at extraordinary heights, including 8,000 feet up in the Himalayas.

## **Sources:**

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