

NON-BITING MIDGES

WHAT ARE MIDGES?

Midges are non-biting flies that belong to the family *Chironomidae*. They are about a half-inch in length and light green to brown in color. Midges are commonly mistaken for mosquitoes. However, midges are smaller in size, have shorter scale-free wings that are shorter than their body and have longer front legs. Many midge species rest with their front legs extended outward with their wings spread like a “V”. Unlike mosquitoes, midges do not bite because they lack the proboscis (piercing-sucking mouth parts) required for taking blood from a vertebrate host. Since midges do not bite or take blood, they do not transmit disease.



MIDGE SOURCES

Midges develop and breed in aquatic habitats similar to mosquitoes. Midges develop in mud on the bottom of lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and basins. Good water management practices and engineering controls minimize midge breeding. Pesticide application is used only as a last resort to control midge populations.

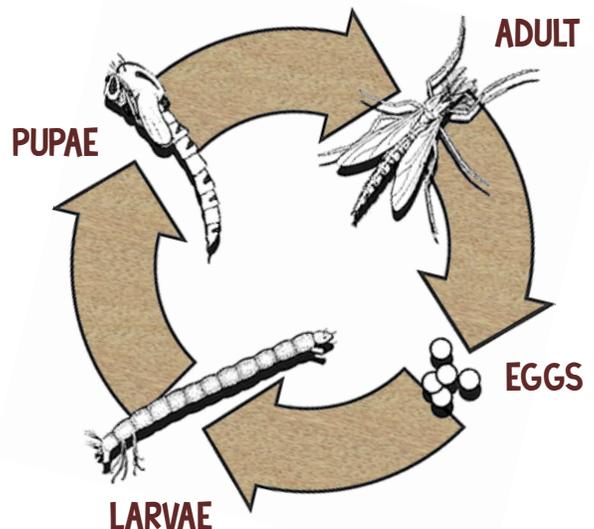
LIFE CYCLE

Eggs: Eggs are laid in a jelly-like mass on water or in the mud.

Larvae: Newly hatched from eggs, larvae burrow into mud. The larvae are often bright red and live in water or wet soil, where they feed upon organic matter, particularly algae.

Pupae: The pupae rise to the water surface after the final larval stage and soon emerge as winged adults.

Adults: Depending on the species and weather conditions, adults will live about 7 days. Males form swarms where they capture females for mating.



IMPACT ON LIVING STANDARDS

When a large number of midges emerge, they invade nearby residences, becoming an annoyance, disrupting outdoor activities such as jogging, barbequing, etc. around dusk. They are attracted to outdoor lights located within about a quarter mile of their breeding sources and may enter homes. Flying adults can become stuck on newly painted surfaces and can damage walls, ceilings, curtains, and other property. They can be found resting on cars, screen doors, windows, walls, under eaves, porches, entryways, bushes and other vegetation.



Green female midge (*bugguide.net*)



Female midge (*Cirrus Image*)

IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Since midges do not bite or take blood, they are not considered a public health concern because they do not transmit diseases like West Nile Virus, encephalitis and malaria (mosquito-borne diseases). Although midges do not bite, they often occur in large numbers and can be very annoying. Swarms can cause discomfort or irritation by entering the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Several species have been documented as the cause of allergies in people exposed to massive swarms.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

- Midges are highly attracted to lights and "Bug Zappers." Minimizing the use of outside electric lights or using less powerful bulbs will help to reduce their presence near your home.
- Avoid using "Bug Zappers" or other electrical traps, which are virtually ineffective. If you do use a "Bug Zapper," keep it as far away from your home as possible to maximize its effectiveness.
- Use yellow light bulbs in outdoor fixtures; yellow is less attractive to midges.
- Delay turning lights on as long as possible after sunset.
- Keep doors closed and windows tightly screened to prevent midges from entering your home.
- Minimize fertilizer and other organic run-off from your property; midges thrive in organic-rich environments.