

Taking the Bite Out of Mosquitoes

SUCTION TOOL EXTRACTS INSECT POISON
TO STOP ITCHING, STINGING, SWELLING **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

LOVE HOT WEATHER, but because I'm highly allergic to mosquitoes I dread going outdoors during warm-weather months at home in New Jersey. Sometimes I douse myself with insect repellent that has DEET but cannot tolerate the awful odor these products cause when coming in contact with the skin.

I've even tried citronella bug bracelets. They're cute because they come in different colors, so I can coordinate with my outfits and be a fashion statement. But you get what you pay for—and they also reek. What's an allergic gal to do? Enter the Bug Bite Thing.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Have you invented anything before?

Kelley Higney (KH): I am the mother of two beautiful daughters, living in sunny south Florida. For the last 15 years, I worked in our family-owned business (third generation), A.C. Kerman, which supplies outdoor gear and equipment and specializes in international export and distribution.

I pretty much grew up in an office, started answering phones as early as I could speak, and could recognize every Federal Express, United Parcel Service and postal truck by the age of 3!

Since Bug Bite Thing's launch, it has now become my full-time job. I have always had that ability to really empathize with people and their situations, and that is one of the reasons Bug Bite Thing has become so personal for me.

EGT: How did this invention come about?

KH: Originally from San Diego, I was completely unprepared for how the mosquitoes would impact my family's quality of life when we moved to south Florida. I had tried every over-the-counter cream, repellent and natural remedy I could find, but nothing was working. We were miserable. Using my international background, I started doing some research and speaking with some of our customers on how insect bites are combated in other countries.

I discovered a tool that uses suction to remove the irritant that is left just under the skin from mosquitoes, bees, wasps and ants. By removing the irritant, the body stops producing the reaction that causes you to itch and swell. After trying the product, I couldn't believe how effective it was.

After years of suffering, there was finally something that was helping my daughter and me. We both typically get large welts with days of pain and itching. There was no question in my mind that I needed to make the product available to everyone that suffers like we do. That is how Bug Bite Thing was born.

EGT: How does it work?

KH: You place the plastic tool over a bite or sting, pull up the handles and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. The insect saliva and/or venom is suctioned into the removable cap that can be taken off and cleaned. It also reverses exposing a smaller opening, so the suction can be used on fingers or smaller areas.

You have complete control over the suction, so it is perfect for small children or people with sensitive skin. It fits in the palm of your hand, is chemical-free

Kelley Higney, with daughters Leah, 6, and Lilly, 1, saw her family was being affected by mosquitoes at home in south Florida.



“There was no question in my mind that I needed to make the product available to everyone that suffers like we do.” —KELLEY HIGNEY



and reusable. The product allows you to eliminate the problem versus masking it with creams and chemicals. There are clinical trials on the product that can be found on the bottom of our website.

EGT: Is it only for use with mosquito bites, or with other pests?

KH: The product works on mosquitoes, bees, wasps, ants and other biting insects. It is also effective at pulling out splinters and bee stingers.

EGT: Please share your patent experience.

KH: Protecting our brand was the most important thing to us, so we made the decision to hire an attorney. The process took about one year for approval on everything we were eligible for, including our trademark. We are very happy with the results.

EGT: Have you encountered any obstacles in the development of The Bug Bite Thing?

KH: The biggest obstacle we have faced is introducing this new concept of insect bite relief to the masses. We never anticipated how difficult it would be to just tell people about the product and spread

the awareness on a large level. Social media, word of mouth and the news have been our biggest driving factors.

Paid marketing has been unsuccessful for us because of the costs involved in comparison to the \$9.95 price of the product. The product's success has almost completely been driven by word of mouth and education.

Another obstacle we have had to overcome was, we are a one-SKU item. When we launched, we played around with the idea of introducing a line of products or other products that complemented the Bug Bite Thing at the same time. We ultimately decided we really wanted to stay focused on bringing awareness to the Bug Bite Thing without any distractions.

Big-box retailers do not like one-SKU items (especially priced at \$9.95). We had to work hard at driving enough awareness and sales history to prove that we belong in some of these big-box stores. Bug Bite Thing has just been accepted as a one-SKU item in CVS for spring of 2019!

EGT: Where are you manufacturing?

KH: The product is manufactured out of Denmark.

Leah Higney shows how to use the Bug Bite Thing: Place the plastic tool over a bite or sting, pull up the handles and hold for 10 to 30 seconds.



“I encourage everyone who has a winning product or invention to test the market and demographic before investing a ton of money.” —KELLEY HIGNEY

EGT: Where are you selling?

KH: We currently sell on our website, Amazon and to select dealers. We have secured distribution in South Korea, where the product has become quite popular. As mentioned, we will be selling in CVS for 2019 mosquito season.

EGT: Please tell us about your 100-percent money-back guarantee.

KH: Our goal is for anyone who suffers from bug bites to get relief. To overcome any skepticism, we offer a 100-percent money back guarantee on the product so there is never any risk to try it. Our goal is not to just sell a product; it is to give people who suffer relief. If you are unhappy with the unit, we encourage you to send it back!

EGT: How are you handling your PR?

KH: We currently handle all of our PR in-house. We have hired out multiple times but have found it to be not cost effective for our specific product.

The learning factor that surrounds our product has made it difficult for a third party to handle our PR. Many questions come up that would be difficult for someone who didn't know the product inside and out to answer.

Aside from our own social media posts, we reach out to bloggers, influencers and new stations. We are always looking to partner with any influencers, bloggers or reporters who may think their audience can benefit learning about the Bug Bite Thing.

EGT: Any plans to increase your product line?

KH: There is always the possibility, and I think eventually that would be something we would explore. Right now, we are focusing on spreading awareness in the U.S. and working with distributors internationally to make the Bug Bite Thing known worldwide.

We are also really studying who our customer is and what products may be of interest to them in the future. I am currently exploring a carrying case that Bug Bite Thing can be stored in to keep the unit clean in a travel bag or purse.

EGT: Any advice for novice inventors?

KH: You know your product and market better than anyone else. Always trust your gut. I was told so many times that I needed another supporting product or line of products to launch Bug Bite Thing. I was told this was a hobby or side business more times than I can count. I never let it be. I refused to believe them, because I was the one receiving daily feedback from our customers on how the product has been life-changing for them like it was for me.

I encourage everyone who has a winning product or invention to test the market and demographic before investing a ton of money. Reach out to networking groups or Facebook groups and ask for feedback. When we first launched, I thought my number one demographic would be mothers. I spent a lot of money designing packaging and content that specifically targeted mothers. It turns out that our number one demographic is grandparents purchasing for themselves and their families. We had to revamp our packaging and content to really connect with our largest demographic.

Recognize when to listen, ignore or respond to customer comments. When you are passionate about your product/invention, it is very easy to get defensive to some of the negative comments that are posted publicly or on social media.

If the comments attack you personally are truly offense or inappropriate, delete, report and ignore. If the comments may not be what you want to hear about your product, listen. Maybe there is an underlying manufacturing issue preventing the product from working properly, or maybe there is a hidden gem suggestion that you can incorporate for Version 2! Try to be involved with your customers as much as possible and encourage feedback. 📞

Details: bugbitething.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



Contents

January 2019 Volume 35 Issue 1



18



Feature

- 26 **2019 United States Trade Show Calendar**
Expanded List of Events

Inventor Spotlight

- 18 **Taking the Bite Out of Mosquitoes**
Mom's Suction Invention
- 22 **The Right Button**
Wearable Smart Messaging

Departments

- 7 **Everybody's Talking**
Conversation Pieces
- 8 **Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 10 **Time Tested**
Loudspeaker's Origins
- 12 **Social Hour**
Instagram Stories
- 14 **Lander Zone**
The Future of Inventing?
- 16 **To Market**
Deep-digging Research Tips
- 24 **Inventing 101**
Patenting Software
- 34 **Rau's Research**
Reigning Cats and Dogs
- 36 **IP Market**
Patent Universe Expanding
- 40 **Prototyping**
Answering Your Questions
- 42 **Patent Pending**
Lessons From Monopoly®
- 46 **Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating



22



34

Inventors

JANUARY 2019 Volume 35 Issue 1

DIGEST

NEW YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

2019 CALENDAR OF U.S. TRADE SHOWS, MAKER FAIRS AND INVENTOR MEETINGS

**A Pro's Tips
on Researching**
MAKING SURE YOUR
IDEA IS UNIQUE

**AI Looming Large
in Inventing's Future**
HOW HUMANS MAY
HAVE TO ADAPT

**Marketing With
Instagram Stories**
CONNECTING VIA
PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

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