

Tiny Terminators

Aishna Rahi, GT Network, explores how 'chota packet, bada dhamaka' is the perfect line for these tiny, harmless looking creatures that cause thousands of deaths every year. 'Take a bite,' sang Beabadoobee, but these diminutive overachievers really ran with it.

Mosquito | Ol' timer

Predation: They slurp on your blood, inject their saliva, then leave you with unwanted mementos like malaria & dengue.

Habitat: Different types of water bodies attract different genera of this big family, but stagnancy is the main criteria.

Signature: Mosquito eggs can survive being dried out for up to 8 months and hatch in an instant as they touch water.

Info-bite: In the Greco-Persian wars, Anopheles mosquitoes weakened Persian troops in marshlands near the Battle of Plataea, contributing to their defeat.

Kissing bug | Bad romance

Predation: A kiss, with a bathroom run just near the bite. Hardly polite, and extremely unhygienic way to spread the Chagas disease.

Habitat: A parasite, it either rides the coattails of pets and rodents or hides in dark corners of homes.

Signature: Over 11 species exist in the US, most of them have a 'cone-shaped' head, thin antennae, and thin legs.

Info-bite: Some people are highly allergic to their bites, which can result in anaphylactic shock (dangerous drop in BP).

Flea | Medieval menace

Predation: After feasting on the blood of mammals and birds alike, they play the nasty version of 'pass the parcel'. The parcel in such cases involve bacteria such as Yersinia pestis, which caused the Black Death in 1346.

Habitat: They thrive in warm, humid, and shaded environments.

Signature: A single flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day; they can also jump at least a foot in the air - which is 150 times their height.

Info-bite: Their prehistoric ancestors, Pseudopulex jurassicus, lived 165 million years ago and grew up to 0.8 inches long to feed on dinosaurs.

Locust | Crop-raider

Predation: The gluttonous grasshoppers form armies and vacuum-clean the crops with their insatiable appetite, cursing humans with hunger.

Habitat: Dry regions and grasslands.

Signature: Pulling up in massive swarms like a Karan Aujla concert, they are migratory pests who can travel up to 145km a day.

Info-bite: In 1954, a large swarm made a historic transatlantic journey, flying from breeding ground in NW Africa to Great Britain.

Tsetse fly | Insomnia's intern

Predation: One bite can wreck your sleep cycle, turning you from muggle to muddlehead.

Habitat: Found near rivers and thick vegetation, enjoying a resort life.

Signature: They produce 'fly milk' which, like mammal milk, is rich in 12 major proteins as well as digestive enzymes and minerals.

Info-bite: Adult female tsetse flies suckle their young inside their uterus before giving birth to fully formed infants.