



Jeb Bush
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A.
Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 3, 2004

Contact: Lindsay Hodges
850-245-4111

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OFFICIALS EMPHASIZE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO HELP PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS AND OTHER MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

Tallahassee - Florida Department of Health (DOH) officials today emphasized the importance of Florida's residents and visitors protecting themselves against mosquito-borne diseases.

"While mosquitoes may harbor serious disease-causing infections year-round, we are beginning the season during which we typically see increases in mosquito populations," said DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H. "It is very important to exercise mosquito bite precautions critical to preventing mosquito-borne disease."

Throughout the year, DOH works with partner agencies, including the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, mosquito control agencies and state universities, to monitor for the presence of mosquitoes carrying illnesses.

Symptoms of West Nile virus may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Physicians should contact their County Health Department if they suspect an individual may have a mosquito-borne illness. DOH laboratories provide testing services for physicians treating patients with clinical signs of mosquito-borne disease.

DOH continues to advise the public to remain diligent in their personal mosquito protection efforts. These should include the "5 D's and 1 S" for prevention:

- **Dusk and Dawn** -- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, for many species this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
 - **Dress** -- Wear clothing that covers skin.
 - **DEET** -- When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) are recommended. Products with concentrations up to 30% DEET are generally recommended for most situations. (It is not recommended to use DEET on children less than 2 months old. Instead, infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting used over carriers when mosquitoes are present). If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Always read the manufacturer's directions carefully before you put on a repellent.
 - **Drainage** -- Check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs.
- AND**
- **Screens** -- - Make sure that windows remain closed or are sealed completely by screens at night.

Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.

Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.

Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.

Pick up all beverage containers and cups.

Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.

Pump out bilges on boats.



Jeb Bush
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A.
Secretary

Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

DOH continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito borne illnesses, including West Nile (WN) virus, Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE), St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE), malaria, and dengue. Residents of Florida can report dead birds via the Web site <http://www.wildflorida.org/bird> or by calling their local county health department. For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, visit DOH's Environmental Health website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/hsee/arbo/index.htm>, call the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-888-880-5782, or your local county health department.

###