



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EMPHASIZES MEASURES TO HELP PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) emphasizes the importance of protection against mosquito-borne diseases. Throughout the year, DOH works with partner agencies, including the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, mosquito control agencies and state universities, to monitor for the presence of illnesses carried by mosquitoes.

“As we approach the summer months, Florida will experience an increase in its mosquito populations,” Division of Environmental Health Director Lisa Conti, D.V.M., M.P.H., Dipl. ACVPM, said. “Taking a few simple steps can drastically reduce the chances of contracting a mosquito-borne illness.”

Symptoms of West Nile virus (WNV) infection, St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE), and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Physicians should contact a local 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 diseases.

DOH advises Floridians to protect themselves from mosquito bites by following the “5 D’s”:

- **Drainage** – Rid the area around your home of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.
- **DEET** – Repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) are recommended to protect against mosquito exposure. Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus are other repellent options.
- **Dress** – Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- **Dusk and Dawn** – Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.

Tips on Repellent Use:

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET are generally recommended. Other potential mosquito repellents, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in April 2005, contain picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients on the product label.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate. According to the CDC, mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under age three. DEET is not recommended on children younger than two months old.
- Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when mosquitoes are present.



- Avoid applying repellents to children's hands. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

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

- Clean out leaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove or drain old tires used in playgrounds.
- 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.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet 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 water flow.

Monitoring wild bird deaths can help officials track the spread of some mosquito-borne diseases. Anyone who discovers a dead bird is encouraged to report it via the Internet. The bird mortality reporting system is located on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's website at: www.MyFWC.com/bird/. Citizens may also report dead birds to a county health department or local FWC office.

DOH promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida. For more information on mosquito borne illnesses, visit the DOH website at www.myfloridaEH.com, the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov or a local county health department.

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