

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Advisory: Dengue presence in Key West

Monroe County Health Department Administrator Bob Eadie has issued a health advisory, effective immediately, following confirmation of the presence of dengue fever in Key West.

A tourist from New York who felt ill shortly after spending a week in Key West last month has been identified as the first locally acquired dengue infection case in Florida in decades. The tourist has fully recovered.

In collaboration with the Monroe County Health Department, the Florida Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will send a team to Key West this weekend to interview residents and take blood samples in an effort to identify the specific serotype of the virus and determine its place of origin.

Within the past two weeks, the department was able to confirm one other case of dengue and submit samples on two other possible cases to its labs. All three cases are linked to individuals who live in or frequent Old Town. All three individuals have fully recovered.

The Monroe County Health Department, the Florida Department of Health, the CDC and the Mosquito Control Board are all working closely to alleviate the threat posed by the emergence of this disease.

Mosquito Control has expanded its control measures to include increased aerial and ground spraying, environmental surveys and breeding site mitigation. The elimination of adult mosquitoes and breeding sites are among the most effective measures to mitigate the presence of the mosquito.

“Everyone who was ill has fully recovered,” Eadie said. “Dengue is rare in Florida, but not unknown. It’s just one of several mosquito-borne illnesses monitored by the department and why we continually remind the public to take precautions against mosquito bites.”

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by a breed of mosquito common to the southeastern United States and the tropics. It is not spread from person to person.

More than 100 million cases of dengue occur every year worldwide.

Although a number of cases of dengue are reported in Florida each year in immigrants and travelers to tropical areas, the department said that this is the first locally acquired case of dengue reported in more than 40 years in the state.

“Many people may be infected and not develop any symptoms,” Eadie said. “The Department of Health and the CDC will have to do some detective work after interviewing and drawing blood from residents who appear to be perfectly fine but may have the virus. They can use the information to pinpoint where we might have problem areas, particularly with regard to mosquitoes and breeding sites.”

Symptoms of dengue include high fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, backache, joint and muscle pains, nausea and vomiting and sometimes rash. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek care from a medical provider.

People with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension or congestive heart failure, maybe at increased risk of severe disease.

Dengue hemorrhagic fever is a more severe form of dengue that develops in only a small percentage of cases, but can prove fatal if not treated properly. However, with timely medical treatment, the mortality rate is less than 1 percent.

“There is no vaccine or antidote for dengue,” Eadie said. “The best way to safeguard you and your loved ones from getting the virus is to take preventive measures against mosquitoes. These include making sure there are no containers with standing water, eliminating mosquitoes from one’s residences and using repellent to ward off bites.”

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent.
- In protecting children, make sure the repellent is appropriate. DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old.
- Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when outside.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child’s skin and clothing.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing. Do not apply repellent to the eyes or mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Remove water in old tires, buckets, garbage cans and other containers where water collects.
- Check clogged gutters and flat roofs that may have poor drainage.
- Fill in holes or dips in the ground that collect water. Level the ground around your home so water can run off.
- Empty birdbaths, water bowls, plant pots and wading pools once or twice a week.
- Store boats upside down or with a cover.

For more information on dengue, visit www.floridashealth.com and www.cdc.gov/dengue .

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