



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

--Prevention steps are critical in protecting against illnesses--

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Department of Health (DOH) officials emphasize to Florida's residents and visitors the importance of protecting themselves 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.

"During the summer months, Florida experiences an increase in its mosquito populations," said Surgeon General Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H., "Mosquito-borne illnesses are entirely preventable by taking a few simple steps to avoid mosquito bites."

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 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 diseases.

DOH continues to advise Floridians to remain diligent in protecting themselves from mosquito bites by following the "5 D's," which include:

- **Drainage** – Check around your home to rid the area of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.
- **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. 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 seeking blood. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours.

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always **read label directions carefully** for the approved usage before applying a repellent to skin. Some repellants 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 to be listed 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 the age of 3 years. 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 mosquitoes are present.
- **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.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, 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 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.
- 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.

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/. If people do not have access to the Internet, they may report dead birds to their county health department or local FWC office.

For more information on mosquito borne illnesses, visit the DOH Web site at www.floridashealth.com, the CDC Web site www.cdc.gov or contact your local county health department.

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