

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR HOME AGAINST MOSQUITOES ALL YEAR LONG**

**TAMPA, FLA.** – The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) reminds residents and visitors of the importance of protecting against mosquitoes all year long. With the Tampa Bay area’s hot summers and mild winters, mosquitoes are always around, so it’s important to be mindful of preventing mosquito bites and the spread of mosquitoes in Hillsborough County. A locally acquired human case of West Nile Virus has been detected; and in response, DOH-Hillsborough and Hillsborough County Mosquito control are collaboratively responding through prevention, mosquito population control, and surveillance efforts.

DOH-Hillsborough reminds residents and visitors to take basic precautions to limit exposure, in order to mitigate the risk of being bitten.

To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to “Drain and Cover.”

**Drain** standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flowerpots or any other containers where sprinkler or rainwater has collected.
- Discard old tires, bottles, pots, broken appliances and other items not being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets’ water bowls at least twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that do not accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

**Cover** skin with clothing or repellent.

- Clothing - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- Repellent - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
  - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone and IR3535 are effective.
  - Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.
- Check and repair screens on doors and windows. Keep them closed and use air conditioning when possible.
- Make sure window screens are in good repair to reduce the chance of mosquitoes indoors.

**Tips on Repellent Use**

- Apply insect repellent that contains DEET (10-30%), picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone or IR3535.
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5%. Do not apply permethrin directly to skin. Some sports clothing and gear come pretreated with permethrin.
- Use insect repellent approved by the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) on exposed skin and clothing. EPA’s helpful search tool can help you find the product that best suits your needs.
- Follow instructions on the product label, especially if you’re applying it to children.

- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- Always follow instructions when applying insect repellent to children and do not use repellents with DEET on babies younger than 2 months or oil of lemon eucalyptus on children under 3 years old.
- 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.

### **Symptoms of West Nile Virus**

About 1 in 5 people who are infected, develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Most people with febrile illness due to West Nile virus recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or *months*.

While most cases are mild, about 1 in 150 people may develop a severe illness affecting the central nervous system such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord).

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, and know you have come into contact with mosquitoes, contact your healthcare provider.

### **Travel Tips**

Mosquitoes spread viruses and parasites that cause diseases. Before you travel to areas wherein mosquito-borne diseases are found, talk to your healthcare provider about your health concerns, and ask about malaria prevention medicine.

Mosquitoes need standing water to reproduce, so you may want to consider planning your travels to tropical regions during the dry season when mosquitos are less prevalent. That's not to say that there are no mosquitoes outside of the rainy season, but higher temperatures and fewer puddles in which to breed, make them considerably less active.

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### **About the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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