



# Central Michigan District Health Department

*Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*



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## **PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**

**To:** Local News Media

**From:** Central Michigan District Health Department

**RE:** Avoid Mosquito Bites

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### **Mosquitos – Avoid the Bite**

The mild winter weather and the recent rainfall have made ideal conditions for an explosion in the mosquito population. Measures should be taken now to avoid mosquitos and prevent bites to protect you and your family from mosquito-borne diseases. Mosquitos found in the central Michigan area are capable of transmitting several diseases through bites. Diseases that can be carried by area mosquitos include West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), St. Louis encephalitis, and the California group of encephalitis viruses that includes La Crosse encephalitis. EEE infected several horses late last summer and became a concern for people living in infected areas. Until the weather cools and we have several hard frosts or freezes, the risk of exposure to mosquito-borne disease will persist.

People infected with mosquito-borne disease may experience headache, chills, fever, weakness, muscle pain, joint pain, that could progress to more serious neurologic disease. Young children, people over 60 years of age, and people with certain chronic conditions or weakened immune systems are at greater risk for serious disease.

### **What You Can Do**

The overall risk of getting a mosquito-borne disease is very low, but because the illness could become life threatening, precautions should be taken. Persons who experience flu-like symptoms, high fever, severe or unusual headaches, neck stiffness, seizures or other unusual symptoms should seek medical care as soon as possible. Tips to prevent bites from mosquitos include:

- Avoid activities in areas where large numbers of mosquitoes are present.
- Wear clothing that covers the arms and legs when outdoors, especially at dusk and at dawn.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain the active ingredient DEET. When applying DEET to young children, spray DEET on a cloth, and then wipe it on a child's skin so that the eyes and hands are not sprayed. The Environmental Protection Agency has a website that can help you find a repellent that is right for you at: [www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you](http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you).

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- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Whenever you use an insecticide or insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the label for use.
- In heavily infested areas treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase pretreated clothing, which will repel mosquitos and other insects through multiple washes.
- Drain water from potential mosquito breeding sites including flowerpots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires, buckets, cans, and similar items in which mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Make sure your window screens are kept in good repair and that all your doors shut tightly.
- Keep your lawn mowed to reduce hiding places for mosquitos in your yard.

An increase in disease among wildlife often precedes an increased risk to humans. To report a dead bird or other dead wildlife go to: <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ORS/Survey/4>. By reporting dead wildlife, you can help experts determine when mosquito-borne disease risk is increasing. More information about zoonotic and vector-borne diseases can be found at: [www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases).

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon. Visit our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org), LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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