



CITY of NORTHAMPTON
Department of Health & Human Service
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Heavy Rains Lead to Increased Mosquito Activity

NORTHAMPTON - The widespread flooding and heavy rains in our area have caused a jump in mosquito breeding activity, which increases the risk of mosquito-borne diseases, including eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) in our community. Mosquito control is an essential strategy for the prevention of mosquito-borne illness and an important public health function.

Northampton is a part of the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District

The City of Northampton Department of Health and Human Services has been a member community of the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD) since it was established on October 18, 2017, in accordance with State law (M.G.L. c. 252). PVMCD provides mosquito control services to 23 municipalities in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties. PVMCD uses an approach called integrated pest management (IPM) to make the best decisions about mosquito control methods that will reduce the risk of mosquito-borne illness while minimizing the risks to people and the environment. Services are tailored to the member communities' unique geographical makeup and resident needs and are determined in consultation with local municipal officials, including boards of health. Northampton's mosquito control program aims to identify and reduce mosquito-borne public health threats in the most ecologically responsible manner through continuous monitoring techniques, weekly disease testing, source reduction, increased sanitation, and using the lowest-risk pesticides when necessary. All mosquito management decisions will be made after conducting surveillance and determining that mosquito populations have reached an action threshold.

Additionally, if source reduction of water cannot be attained, the City of Northampton contracts with a mosquito control company to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in standing water by applying larvicide. The approved larvicide is species-specific and will not harm humans, animals, birds, other insects, fish, shellfish, plants, or the environment. Given the recent heavy rains and flooding in some regions of the City, Health Commissioner Merridith O'Leary has asked the mosquito control company to assess known areas of standing water and re-treat areas of concern.

Commissioner O'Leary states, "Mosquito abundance and mosquito-borne disease risk are affected by multiple environmental factors which vary over time and geographic location. The two most important contributors to mosquito development are precipitation and temperature. All mosquito species depend on the presence of water for the first stages of life. Mosquito populations increase when precipitation is plentiful and decrease during dry periods. Warmer temperatures shorten both the time it takes for mosquitoes to develop from egg to adult and the time it takes for a mosquito to be able to transmit a pathogen after ingesting an infected blood meal."

Take Precautions to Prevent Disease

The two mosquito-borne diseases of most concern in Massachusetts are eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), which was identified as a human disease in 1938, and West Nile virus (WNV) infection, which has been present since 2000. WNV infection is more common, though typically less severe than EEE. Most people infected with West Nile virus do not develop any symptoms. However, some may experience flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, joint pain, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Although rare, some people who are infected develop severe illness. If you think you or a family member might have West Nile virus disease, talk with your healthcare provider. Children are at greater risk from eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) than from West Nile virus (WNV).

The risk for mosquito-borne illness will continue until the first hard frost in your area. Hard frosts occur when temperatures fall below 28 degrees for several hours. Until then, it is important to implement preventive measures.

Advice to protect yourself and your family:

- Use mosquito repellent any time you are outdoors, such as waiting for the bus, walking to school or during outdoor sports events and practices. Even being out a short time can be long enough to get a mosquito bite. Make sure to follow directions on the label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used only in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.
- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many species of mosquitoes. Take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing during the evening and early morning.
- Use mosquito netting on baby carriages or playpens when your baby is outdoors.
- When weather permits, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.
- Make sure screens are repaired and are tightly attached to doors and windows.
- Remove standing water from places like ditches, gutters, old tires, wheelbarrows, and wading pools. Mosquitoes can begin to grow in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than four days, so don't let water collect around your home.
- Avoid camping overnight near freshwater swamps to reduce your risk of exposure to mosquitoes. If you go camping, use a tent with mosquito netting and appropriate repellents.
- Cats and dogs can become infected with mosquito-borne illness. You can protect your animals by using veterinary approved products containing permethrin. Talk to your vet if you have questions about these products or if you have concerns about your animals' health.

For more information, contact: Merridith O'Leary, Health Commissioner, Northampton Health and Human Services, (413) 587-1215.