



BOARD OF HEALTH

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Mosquito Populations are High this Summer

One Human Case of West Nile Virus (WNV) and One Case of Equine Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) Reported in MA

NO Human Cases of WNV or EEE in Bedford so far this season

August 6, 2024 - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced today that the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) and the first equine (horse) case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) were identified. The WNV case was identified in Hampden County, and the EEE case was identified in Plymouth County. Mosquitoes have tested positive for WNV and EEE throughout the state. To date, no mosquitoes have been found to carry EEE in Bedford, and there have been no human or equine cases of either WNV or EEE in Bedford. One mosquito sample tested positive for WNV earlier this month. The risk of WNV in Bedford remains moderate, and the risk of EEE in Bedford remains low.

WNV and EEE are most commonly transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquitoes that carry these viruses are common throughout the state and are found in urban as well as more rural areas. Most people who get WNV or EEE will have no symptoms, while some people will develop symptoms such as fever, headache, joint pain, and muscle pain. In rare cases, WNV and EEE can lead to encephalitis, meningitis, and death.

While WNV and EEE can infect people of all ages, there are a couple of age groups at higher risk. Those at higher risk for getting WNV are people over 50 years of age. Those at higher risk for getting EEE are people over 50 years of age as well as under 15 years of age.

August and September are the months when most human cases of WNV and EEE occur. While EEE carrying mosquitoes like to lay their eggs in hardwood swamps, WNV carrying mosquitoes prefer to lay their eggs in catch basins, clogged rain gutters, buckets, and other water holding containers. Residents have an important role to play in reducing the risk of WNV and EEE and protecting themselves and their loved ones by taking a few, common-sense precautions and mosquito proofing their property.

Mosquito Control in Bedford

The Bedford Health Department continues to work with the MDPH and the Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control Project (EMMCP) to monitor local mosquito populations for mosquito-borne diseases such as WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Bedford has a robust mosquito control program that includes an annual helicopter application of biological larvicide to wetland

areas in town by EMMCP and each summer the Bedford DPW treats catch basins in town. Furthermore, the EMMPC has conducted several truck mounted and areal sprays in town so far this year. Bedford recently had a truck-mounted mosquito spraying on July 30, 2024. Mosquito spraying events are announced via the Health Department website at <https://www.bedfordma.gov/health-department>.

Take precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones against WNV and mosquito-borne illnesses:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **Apply Insect Repellent** when you go outdoors. Use a repellent with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **IR3535** or **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.
- **Clothing Can Help** reduce mosquito bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours** - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. When risk is increased, consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning. If you are outdoors at any time and notice mosquitoes around you, take steps to avoid being bitten by moving indoors, covering up and/or wearing repellent.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- **Drain Standing Water** – Many mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- **Install or Repair Screens** - Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all your windows and doors.

Information about mosquito activity in Massachusetts may be found on the Mosquito-borne Disease page on the MDPH website at <https://www.mass.gov/mosquito-borne-diseases>. Facts sheets on WNV, EEE and other mosquito-related materials are available by contacting the Bedford Health Department at 781-275-6507 or by accessing the Health Department website at <https://www.bedfordma.gov/health-department>.