

## **Preventing Mosquito Bites**

### **Why is it important to prevent mosquito bites?**

Mosquitoes can spread diseases that make you sick. In Massachusetts, mosquitoes can give you eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus and West Nile virus (WNV).

Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) is a rare but serious disease. Symptoms include high fever, stiff neck, headache, and lack of energy. Swelling of the brain, called encephalitis, is the most dangerous complication, and can cause coma and death. Most cases in Massachusetts occur in the southeastern part of the state.

West Nile virus infections are more common than EEE, but most do not cause any symptoms. Mild WNV infections can cause fever, headache and body aches, often with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. A small number of people (less than 1 out of 100) who get infected with West Nile virus develop more serious illness; this is more common in people over the age of 50. Symptoms of serious illness include headache, high fever, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness, tremors (shaking), convulsions, coma, paralysis swelling of the brain, and sometimes death.

Only a small number of mosquitoes are infected at any given time, so being bitten by a mosquito does not mean you will get sick. However, the best way to avoid both of these illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

### **See your doctor if you develop these symptoms.**

### **What is the best way to prevent mosquito bites?**

- Use mosquito repellent any time you are outdoors. Even being out a short time can be long enough to get a mosquito bite. Make sure to follow directions on the label.
- Be aware of mosquitoes around you. If mosquitoes are biting you, reapply repellent, or think about going inside.
- 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 evening and early morning -- or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.
- 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, wheel barrows, 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 that carry the EEE virus. If you do go camping, use a tent with mosquito netting and use appropriate repellents.

### **What kind of mosquito repellent should I use?**

