

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“PAY ATTENTION TO PREVENTION”

Health Officials Remind Residents that Prevention is Best Way to Combat Mosquito-borne Illness

(Richmond, Va.) - The last days of summer are upon us, but the mosquito breeding and biting season is not yet over. While Virginians continue to enjoy outdoor activities and Labor Day picnics, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) urges everyone to “Pay Attention to Prevention.” It is the best way to combat mosquito-borne (arboviral) illnesses, such as those caused by West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that nationwide WNV is spreading faster than it has in years past, partly due to a mild winter and several spring rains that allowed the mosquito population to build early. As of August 28, 2012, WNV disease has been reported in four Virginians. This is not unusual in Virginia: there were 9 reports of WNV disease in humans last year; for 2006 to 2010, WNV disease was reported in 1 to 5 persons annually.

This week Virginia is reporting one case of human disease caused by Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. Virginia’s report is only the third case in the U.S. so far this year; the last report of human EEE disease in Virginia was in 2003. In addition, one case of disease caused by the La Crosse encephalitis virus has been reported.

“These reports of disease caused by West Nile virus and these other mosquito-borne viruses are a crucial reminder to all Virginians about the importance of taking the necessary steps to prevent being bitten by a mosquito,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP.

“Most people bitten by a mosquito will not get sick, but West Nile virus, EEE virus and other mosquito-borne viruses can cause serious illness,” said State Epidemiologist David Trump, MD, MPH, MPA. “We’ve had arboviral disease reported from all regions of the state this year, so it’s important for Virginians to protect themselves against mosquito bites, wherever they live, work and play.”

Many of these mosquito-borne illnesses can be prevented by controlling the mosquito population and protecting against mosquito bites in the following ways:

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing
- If possible, stay indoors when mosquitoes are biting.

- Use insect repellent with the smallest percentage of DEET necessary for the length of time you are exposed to mosquitoes. Use according to the manufacturer's directions and DEET should not be applied to infants under two months old.
- Turn over or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays, buckets and toys.
- Eliminate standing water on tarps or flat roofs.
- Clean out birdbaths and wading pools once a week.
- Clean roof gutters and downspout screens.

For more information on West Nile Virus or other arboviral illnesses, please visit our [West Nile Virus webpage](#) or visit CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.

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