



COUNTY OF POLK
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Protect yourself from mosquitoes and the diseases they carry

Record rainfall this summer has resulted in areas of flooding and standing water. These environments are perfect living conditions for mosquitoes, which can be more than just irritating, they can carry deadly diseases such as West Nile Virus.

You can avoid mosquitoes by following these tips:

- Although mosquitoes may bite at any time of day, peak activity is usually during twilight periods (i.e., dawn and dusk) or in the evening after dark. Avoiding the outdoors or focusing preventive actions during peak hours may reduce risk.
- If weather permits, minimize areas of exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats. Tucking in shirts and wearing socks and closed shoes instead of sandals may reduce risk.
- Use insect repellants containing DEET (30%), Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or PMD, or IR3535 on exposed skin and clothing.*
- At least once or twice a week, empty water from flower pots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.
- Place mosquito netting over infant carriers when you are outdoors with infants.

Most people won't develop any symptoms at all but some of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks. Milder West Nile Virus illness improves on its own, and people do not necessarily need to seek medical attention for this infection though they may choose to do so. About one in 150 people infected with West Nile Virus will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent. If you develop symptoms of severe West Nile Virus illness, such as unusually severe headaches or confusion, seek medical attention immediately. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are encouraged to talk to their doctor if they develop symptoms that could be West Nile Virus.

* These repellants have been registered by the EPA and have been found effective and safe for people, including pregnant women and children older than two months. Apply as instructed. Do not use DEET on the hands of young children; avoid applying to areas around the eyes and mouth. Do not use DEET over cuts, wounds or irritated skin. Wash treated skin with soap and water after returning indoors; wash treated clothing.