



NEWS RELEASE Mobile County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mobile County Health Department reports two confirmed cases of human West Nile virus

Dr. Bernard Eichold, Mobile County Health Officer, has been notified of laboratory results indicating two confirmed cases of human West Nile virus (WNV). One case was in the 36619 ZIP code area. The other was in the 36522 ZIP code area. These are the first human cases reported in Mobile County this year.

Dr. Eichold says people should assume that there are mosquitoes in their communities that are infectious for diseases such as WNV or other forms of mosquito-borne encephalitis such as eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE). He also says that the risk of encephalitis spread by mosquitoes is highest from August through the first freeze in the fall.

According to Dr. Eichold, humans with WNV, EEE and SLE often have symptoms of high fever, severe headache, nausea, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness, paralysis, disorientation, and seizures that are severe enough to require medical attention. In rare cases, WNV, SLE, and EEE can cause coma or death. The seriousness of an illness may depend on a person's health and age. WNV affects the elderly most severely, and EEE affects the young and elderly most severely.

Dr. Eichold urges everyone to use precautions to avoid exposure to mosquitoes. Listed below are steps to take to avoid mosquito bites.

Clothing and aromatics

- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothes to help prevent mosquitoes from reaching the skin and to retain less heat, thereby making you less "attractive" to mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are more attracted to dark colors.
- When possible, wear long sleeves and long pants.
- Avoid perfumes, colognes, fragrant hair sprays, lotions and soaps. They attract mosquitoes.

Repellents

- Follow the label instructions when applying repellents. Permethrin repellents are for use only for clothes, not skin.
- When using repellents, avoid contact with eyes, lips, and nasal membranes.
- Use a good mosquito repellent on exposed areas. Some of the most reliable repellents contain the chemical DEET. All repellents should be used in accordance with label instructions.
- Apply DEET repellent on arms, legs, and other exposed areas but never under clothing. After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.

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- Citronella candles and repellents containing citronella can help, but their range is limited. Herbals such as cedar, geranium, pennyroyal, lavender, cinnamon, and garlic are not very effective.

Around the home

- Mosquito activity peaks at dusk and again at dawn. Restrict outdoor activity during these hours.
- Keep windows and door screens in good condition.
- Replace porch lights with yellow light bulbs. They attract fewer insects.
- Mosquitoes breed in standing water so empty all water from old tires, cans and jars, buckets, drums, plastic wading pools, toys, and other containers.
- Clean clogged gutters.
- Remove the rim from potted plants and replace water in plant/flower vases weekly.
- Replenish pet-watering dishes daily and rinse birdbaths weekly.
- Fill tree holes and depressions left by fallen trees with dirt or sand.
- Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito fish or use larvicide “doughnuts.”
- Do not place grass clippings in or blow leaves into drainage ditches or storm drains. This will block the flow of water and allow mosquito breeding near the home.

