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Fight the Bite: Mosquito and Tick Season Begins in Ohio

ODH offers tips on how to prevent mosquito- and tick-borne diseases

COLUMBUS – Mosquito and tick season has officially begun in Ohio, and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) urges people to “fight the bite” and take precautions to prevent bites from mosquitos and ticks which can carry diseases such as West Nile virus, Zika virus and Lyme disease.

In Ohio, ticks are most active April through September, and mosquitoes May through October.

Mosquitoes

Ohio has a type of mosquito that can transmit West Nile virus, and 17 cases were reported in the state last year.

The primary mosquito that transmits Zika virus is found in the tropics and southern U.S., but it is not known to be established in Ohio. A “cousin” of the mosquito is found in parts of Ohio and may potentially transmit Zika virus. Ohio had 95 travel-associated Zika cases last year in returning travelers from Zika-affected areas, and three travel-associated cases so far in 2017.

Nationally, there have been more than 5,000 travel-associated Zika cases in the U.S. since Jan. 2015. The only cases of local mosquito-borne Zika transmission in the continental U.S. were in South Florida and Brownsville, Texas, last year.

“You can take some simple precautions at home and when traveling to prevent potentially serious mosquito-borne diseases,” said Sietske de Fijter, ODH State Epidemiologist and Bureau Chief of Infectious Diseases.

Mosquitoes can live indoors and outdoors, and some species bite during the day while others bite at dusk and dawn. Here are some tips to avoid mosquito bites and prevent mosquito-borne diseases:

- If you are outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, be sure to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, shoes and socks.
- Wear light-colored clothing, which is less attractive to mosquitoes.
- Use EPA-registered mosquito repellent and follow the label directions.
- Wear clothing and gear treated with permethrin, an insecticide (do not apply permethrin directly to skin).
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of your home.

(More)

Here are some tips to eliminate mosquito breeding sites around your home:

- Eliminate standing water.
- Empty or remove water-holding containers, such as buckets, unused flower pots and bird baths.
- Make sure all roof gutters are clean and draining properly.
- Keep child wading pools empty and on their sides when not being used.

Ticks

The types of ticks found in Ohio can transmit a variety of diseases, including Lyme disease, and 160 cases were reported in the state last year.

“If you find a tick attached to your body, remove it and monitor your health to watch for a fever, rash, muscle or joint aches or other symptoms,” said de Fijter. “If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider.”

Here are some tips to avoid tick bites and prevent tick-borne diseases:

- Avoid direct contact with ticks by avoiding wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter, and by walking in the center of trails.
- Wear clothing and gear treated with permethrin, an insecticide (do not apply permethrin directly to skin).
- Use EPA-registered tick repellent and follow the label directions.
- Here are some tips for finding and removing ticks attached to your body:
 - Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
 - Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick, which can cause the mouth parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
 - After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub or soap and water.
 - Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.
 - Avoid folklore remedies such as "painting" a tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly or using heat to make the tick detach from your skin.

Go to the ODH website at odh.ohio.gov for more information about how to prevent mosquito-borne and tick-borne diseases and other information and resources.

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Note to Media – Click on the following links for more information on:

- Zika virus <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/bid/zdp/diseases/zika.aspx>
- West Nile virus <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/bid/zdp/diseases/wnv.aspx>
- Lyme Disease <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/bid/zdp/diseases/lyme.aspx>