



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Prevention is key in safeguarding against tick and mosquito-borne diseases

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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If you spend time outdoors or have pets that go outside, you need to beware of ticks and mosquitoes and the diseases they can carry. You can reduce your risk by using approved insect repellents and taking other precautions.

For most of the state, ticks and mosquitoes are more abundant from late spring to early fall. Ticks are small blood-sucking parasites that can transmit diseases including Rocky Mountain spotted fever, southern tick-associated rash illness and Lyme disease to animals and people. In 2014, more than 1,300 tick-borne disease investigations were conducted by public health staff and over 300 people in Alabama were diagnosed with tick-borne diseases that most likely could have been prevented.

Tick-borne diseases can be difficult to diagnose and confirm, so see your doctor if you have been bitten by a tick and experience any of the following symptoms: rash, fever, headache, fatigue and muscle aches. In extremely rare cases, tick paralysis can occur from the toxin in tick saliva which can be confused with other neurologic diseases. Most tick-borne diseases can be treated successfully with antibiotics if treatment is started early.

To help protect yourself and your family from ticks, the Alabama Department of Public Health recommends the following:

- Use a repellent with 20 percent DEET on exposed skin, and permethrin on clothing
- Tuck pant legs into socks and wear light-colored protective clothing to make tick inspections easier.
- Avoid tick-infested areas such as tall grass, leaf litter or bushy fields.
- Check yourself, your children and your pets daily for ticks and carefully remove any ticks you find as soon as possible.

Many of the same protective measures used for ticks also are effective in preventing mosquito-borne illnesses. The principal mosquito-borne viruses in Alabama are Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), West Nile (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE). Additionally, viruses such as chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis and dengue have been reported, but all cases to date have been related to travel to the Caribbean or other tropical climates.

State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Dee W. Jones said, "With all the outdoor activities in the warm weather months it may not be possible to avoid mosquitoes by staying indoors, but it is more practical to reduce mosquito bites with the use of widely available repellents."

The following are practical strategies for reducing mosquito exposure:

- Stay indoors if possible, especially during the dusk and dawn hours, when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you go out during the dusk and dawn hours, wear light-colored, tightly woven, loose clothing, and insect repellent.
- Wear enough insect repellent to cover skin and clothes that contain one of the following EPA-registered ingredients: DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus/PMD or IR3535.
- Contact your health care provider with concerns about repellents.
 - Do not use repellents under clothing.
 - Never use repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
 - Spray repellent on hands first and then apply it on children and faces. Do not apply to eyes, mouth, and apply sparingly around ears.
 - After returning indoors, wash treated skin and clothes with soap and water.
- Keep window and door screens shut and in good condition. Repair holes.
- Inspect your yard for places a mosquito could use to breed, and eliminate breeding sites.
- Dispose of containers that collect water, like buckets, cans, bottles and jars.
- Repair leaky pipes and outside faucets, unclog drains and gutters.
- Empty and scrub birdbaths, pet bowls and animal troughs to get rid of mosquito eggs.
- Dispose of unused tires. Overturn wheelbarrows, tubs, wading pools or store them under cover when not in use.
- Keep weeds, vines and grass trimmed.
- Fill tree holes with sand or mortar.
- Change water in flower vases and pots twice weekly.

Educational fact sheets are available online as follows:

http://www.adph.org/epi/assets/Tickborne_Flyer.pdf.

http://www.adph.org/epi/assets/Reduce_Mosquitoes.pdf