



NEWS

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Recommendations from the Office of Public Health Start of the 2018 Mosquito Season

Norristown, PA (April 19, 2018) – With the onset of warmer weather, mosquito season is starting! The Montgomery County Office of Public Health (OPH) is recommending some simple steps that residents can take to protect themselves from insect bites and prevent the spread of insect-borne disease.

Mosquito-borne diseases can spread to animals and people by the bite of a mosquito which is carrying the disease. The most commonly occurring mosquito-borne disease in Montgomery County is West Nile Virus (WNV) which is carried by the mosquito species *Culex pipiens* and *Culex restuans*. WNV surfaced in the United States in 1999 and is usually transmitted back and forth between infected birds and mosquitoes. Zika virus is another emerging mosquito-borne illness carried by the *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus* mosquito.

To reduce the likelihood of being bitten by a disease-carrying mosquito, OPH is recommending that residents take steps to eliminate standing water from their property since standing water is a potential breeding ground for mosquitoes. Residents can empty and turn over containers near their home, and clean out gutters around the home that could collect water that allow mosquitoes to breed. Anything that can hold water for five days can breed thousands of mosquitoes. Eliminating standing water has proven effective in controlling WNV.

OPH encourages residents to mosquito-proof their homes by replacing torn screens in doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering the home. Mosquito species have different behavior patterns and feeding habits so mosquito-proofing should be done in both the evening and during the day.

Lastly, OPH encourages residents to practice personal protective measures whenever there is a possibility of encountering active mosquitoes. This includes wearing protective clothing and insect repellent as described below in the “OPH Tips to Reduce Exposure to Mosquitoes.”

OPH will soon begin routine adult mosquito surveillance throughout Montgomery County to monitor trends in

mosquito patterns in our region. If disease-carrying mosquitoes are found in a specific area that could pose a threat to human health, pesticide spraying may be necessary in the targeted area.

Residents who would like to be notified of when mosquito spraying will occur in their area should sign up to receive ReadyMontco alerts at <http://readymontco.org>. The ReadyMontco system replaced the ReadyNotifyPA system in June 2015, and the new system does not include "health" alerts. Residents can sign up for county alerts and municipal alerts for the jurisdiction in which they reside.

Information about mosquito-borne diseases can be found on the OPH website at: www.montcopa.org/mosquito. The mosquito-borne disease page will highlight specific diseases and link residents to our disease-specific pages on WNV and Zika virus.

OPH Tips to Reduce Your Exposure to Mosquitoes:

- Check and repair windows and screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.
- Survey your property and eliminate any standing water, dispose of containers that can collect standing water such as old tires, cans, bottles, buckets, and toys.
- After it rains, empty any plant containers, bird baths, flowerpots, kiddie pools, and pool covers to keep water from collecting in these items.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly and rooftops are free of standing water.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs. Keep them empty and covered if not in use; drain water that collects in pool covers.
- Drill several holes in the bottom of recycling buckets so water can drain from them. Cover trash containers so rain cannot accumulate in them.
- Since clothing can help reduce mosquito bites, wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- Use an approved mosquito repellent when outdoors in areas where mosquitoes are active. Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. Follow the label directions carefully. Do NOT apply repellent to the face.