

Chief Health Officer Advisory

6 January 2014

Status: Active

Health warning on mosquitoes

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Date issued: 6 January 2014

Issued by: Dr Rosemary Lester, Chief Health Officer, Victoria

Issued to: Victorian residents, travellers and visitors, and health professionals.

Key messages

- Residents and visitors to Victoria are being warned to protect against mosquito-borne diseases such as Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses.
- The best protection from these diseases is to avoid mosquito bites.
- Protective measures include regularly using mosquito repellent containing picaridin or DEET, wearing light coloured-loose fitting clothing when outside and ensuring accommodation is mosquito-proof.
- Anyone travelling overseas should pack and regularly apply insect repellent.
- A range of information relating to protecting against mosquito bites is available on the Beat the Bite campaign page on the Better Health Channel.

What is the issue?

Not all mosquitoes carry diseases – most are just a nuisance. Infected mosquitoes can carry a range of diseases including Ross River and Barmah Forest virus. These diseases can cause serious illness and occur regularly in regional Victoria. The summer holiday season is a time of increased outdoor activity so taking measures to avoid mosquito bites is a critical step to protecting against such diseases.

Who is at risk?

Anyone is potentially at risk of being bitten by mosquitoes and while most bites will only cause minor swelling and irritation, an infected mosquito can transmit potentially serious diseases.

Symptoms and transmission

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus disease are similar. Both can cause joint swelling and pain, fatigue and muscle aches. A rash and fever may also develop. While everyone recovers from the initial onset, symptoms may reoccur in some individuals for over a year or more.

Prevention

There are simple steps to protect against mosquito-borne diseases:

- use insect repellents regularly containing picaridin or DEET as an active ingredient on exposed skin areas when camping or engaging in any outdoor activity

- ensure that insect screens fitted to doors and windows are in good condition
- use mosquito coils or citronella candles in small outdoor protected areas.
- wear long, loose-fitting clothing, preferably in light colours
- remove stagnant water around the home or campsites.

More information

Clinical information

<http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook.asp>

Consumer information

Beat the Bite - Better Health Channel

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Beat_the_bite

Contacts

Beat the Bite resources can be ordered at: <http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/resources.asp>

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Yours sincerely



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Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.