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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Enjoy the outdoors but don't forget about mosquitoes...

Just one mosquito bite can transmit West Nile Virus (WNV) or other diseases. When dealing with West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne diseases, prevention is your best bet. Fighting mosquito bites reduces your risk of getting this disease, along with others that mosquitoes can carry. **Take the steps below to reduce your risk:**

Avoid bites and illness – Use insect repellent on exposed skin when you go outdoors. Use an EPA-registered insect repellent such as those with DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Even a short time being outdoors can be long enough to get a mosquito bite.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites – When weather permits, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with repellent containing permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent will give extra protection. Don't apply repellents containing permethrin directly to skin. Do not spray repellent on the skin under your clothing

Mosquito-proof your home - Drain standing water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by getting rid of items that hold water. Install or repair screens. Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having well-fitting screens on both windows and doors. Offer to help neighbors whose screens might be in bad shape.

Clean Up - Mosquito breeding sites can be anywhere. Neighborhood clean up days can be organized by civic or youth organizations to pick up containers from vacant lots and parks, and to encourage people to keep their yards free of standing water. Mosquitoes don't care about fences, so it's important to control breeding sites throughout the neighborhood.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many species of mosquitoes. Take *extra* care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning -- or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.

Something to remember: The chance that any one person is going to become ill from a single mosquito bite remains low. The risk of severe illness and death is highest for people over 50 years old, although people of all ages can become ill.

The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.
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