



Mosquito Control

What is mosquito-borne illness?

Mosquito-borne illness is disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. In the Northeastern United States, viruses such as West Nile Virus (WNV) or Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEEV) have caused illness. However, the risk of becoming infected with WNV or EEEV following a mosquito bite is low. Most people bitten by infected mosquitoes experience no illness or mild illness but a small number of people can develop disease that is more serious.

What is done to reduce the risk of mosquito-borne illness?

Surveillance: Each summer the Suffolk County Mosquito Control Program investigates mosquito breeding sites and traps adult mosquitoes. Adult mosquitoes are tested to determine if they have a mosquito-borne illness and if positive are reported to the public. Also, water samples are collected from possible breeding sites to detect if larvae is present and then treated if necessary.

Education: The Boston Public Health Commission educates residents about steps they can take to limit mosquito breeding areas. Some simple steps include turning over containers such as unused flower pots, garbage cans, wheelbarrows, buckets so that they don't collect water. Also, removing leaves from gutters, covering unused kiddie pools, removing old tires and draining water from pool covers are good ways to reduce mosquito breeding areas.

Larvicide: This is a chemical or bacteria used to reduce mosquito larvae or prevent the mosquito from becoming an adult. Larvicides are placed where mosquitoes are breeding or will likely breed.

Adulticide: This is an ultra-low-volume chemical that is sprayed into the air by trucks in order to reduce the amount of adult mosquitoes. This spray kills adult mosquitoes on contact but only for a short while until the mosquito population increases from future breeding or from mosquitoes entering from untreated areas. This is sometimes done by the Suffolk County Mosquito Control Project in order to reduce the numbers of nuisance adult mosquitoes.

Are these chemicals used to reduce risk of mosquito-borne illness safe?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviews and approves insecticides (and other pesticides) to ensure those used to protect public health are applied by methods that minimize the risk of human exposure and adverse health and environmental effects. The insecticides have been evaluated for this use and have been found to pose minimal risk to human health and the environment when used according to label directions. Nevertheless, no pesticide is absolutely risk free. The likelihood of experiencing adverse health effects as a result of exposure to any pesticide depends primarily on the amount of pesticide that a person contacts and the amount of time the person is in contact with that pesticide.

**For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
617-534-5611 or www.bphc.org**