

TOWN OF BEDFORD

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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) Positive Mosquitoes Found in Massachusetts

July 8, 2024 – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced last week that mosquito samples from Quincy, MA have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), and mosquito samples from Carver, MA have tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). There have been **no** positive cases of WNV or EEE found in humans this year. The risk of WNV and EEE in Bedford remain LOW.

WNV and EEE are transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people with WNV or EEE will have no symptoms. When present, people will have flu-like symptoms: fever, body aches, chills, and/or fatigue. A small percentage of people will develop encephalitis or meningitis, which are serious illnesses and will require prompt medical attention. Symptoms may include: high fever (usually 103°F-106°F), headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, and muscle weakness.

Those at the highest risk of getting WNV and EEE include: people who live in a habitat with high mosquito activity, and those who spend more time outdoors.

Those at the highest risk of getting sick from WNV and EEE include: adults younger than 15 years old and older than 55 years old, and people with weakened immune systems.

Mosquito Control in Bedford

The Bedford Health Department continues to work with the MDPH and the Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control Project (EMMCP) to monitor local mosquito populations for

mosquito-borne diseases such as WNV and EEE. Bedford has a strong mosquito control program that includes annual helicopter application of biological larvicide to wetland areas in town, several truck-mounted biological larvicide sprays to areas in town, catch basin treatments, and mosquito-trap monitoring for mosquito-borne illnesses.

The EMMCP last sprayed for mosquitoes on Monday 6/24/2024. The next truck mounted sprays are scheduled for Monday **7/8/2024**. Mosquito spraying announcements are posted on the Health Department website at <https://www.bedfordma.gov/197/Health-Department>.

Reduce Your Risk of Mosquito Bites

Residents have an important role to play in reducing the risk of WNV and EEE transmission, and protecting themselves and loved ones. The best protection for WNV and EEE is prevention.

Mosquito Proof Your Property – Keep mosquitoes out of your house by repairing any holes in your screens and making sure they are tightly attached to your doors and windows.

Keep mosquitoes off of your property by removing areas of standing water around your home. Mosquitoes can begin to multiply in any puddle or standing water that lasts more than 4 days. Here are some suggestions:

- Look around outside your house for containers and other things that might collect water and turn them over, regularly empty them, or dispose of them.
- Clean clogged roof gutters – remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of rainwater.
- Keep swimming pools clean and properly chlorinated.
- Change the water in birdbaths every few days.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours – Schedule outdoor events to *avoid* the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.

Wear Clothing That Will Reduce Mosquito Bite Risk - When you are outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and socks. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep the mosquitoes away from your skin. (Please make sure to drink lots of water and rest in the shade if it is hot out and you are wearing these items.)

Apply Insect Repellant When Outdoors – Use Repellant with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to the instructions on the product label. Please note DEET products should not be used on infants less than 2 months of age and should be used in concentrations 30% or less in children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used in children less than 3 years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear – this should not be applied to the skin.

Resources and Information

More information about mosquitoes, EPA recommended insect repellants, EEE, and West Nile Virus, please look at the links below:

CDC – Mosquitoes: <https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/index.html>

EPA – Insect Repellants: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>

MDPH – EEE: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/eee-in-massachusetts>

MDPH – West Nile Virus: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/west-nile-virus-wnv>