

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



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KEEPING MORE VICTORIANS SAFE FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES

More Victorians will have protection from the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) this mosquito season, with the Allan Labor Government expanding the eligibility of Victoria's free vaccine program to additional areas across the state.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas visited Springs Medical in Kyneton to announce that from today, people living or working in Alpine, Macedon Ranges, Mansfield and Mitchell local government areas can access the vaccine.

It follows advice from Victoria's Chief Health Officer and means the vaccine is now available to people in 24 regional local government areas, primarily inland riverine regions, where there is a higher risk of exposure to the virus.

Most people with JEV infection do not have symptoms or have only mild symptoms. However, a small number (around one in every 250 people) can develop severe infection of the brain (encephalitis).

Symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and muscle aches, and people with severe infection can develop encephalitis or meningitis which can be fatal.

The free JEV vaccine is available for eligible people through GPs, Aboriginal health services, community pharmacies and some local councils.

Victorians can contact their local public health unit for further information or assistance with locating their local immunisation provider.

Simple and practical steps that Victorians can undertake to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, include:

- wearing long, loose and light-coloured clothing when outdoors
- using mosquito repellents that contain active ingredients including Picaridin or DEET
- spraying or rubbing repellent on children's clothes is recommended, avoiding their skin
- limiting time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most active such as at dawn and dusk
- removing stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed around the home or a campsite
- making sure windows are fitted with mosquito netting or screens.

JEV typically occurs in many parts of southern and eastern Asia, and in recent years has extended beyond its traditional boundaries to eastern Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait, and was first detected in Victoria, and several other parts of Australia, in 2022.

To learn how to protect yourself from mosquito-borne diseases, visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/protect-yourself-mosquito-borne-disease.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Summer provides mosquitos with an ideal breeding ground – as well as getting vaccinated against JEV, Victorians in high-risk areas should take simple actions, like wearing loose-fitting clothes and using mosquito repellent."

"Following expert advice from the Chief Health Officer, we're expanding this important program to ensure more Victorians can access the free JEV vaccine and protect themselves and their loved ones this summer."

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High risk local government areas for mosquito-borne diseases and where residents are eligible for the Japanese encephalitis vaccine include:

- *Alpine*
- *Benalla*
- *Buloke*
- *Campaspe*
- *Gannawarra*
- *Greater Bendigo*
- *Greater Shepparton*
- *Hindmarsh*
- *Horsham*
- *Indigo*
- *Loddon*
- *Macedon Ranges*
- *Mansfield*
- *Mitchell*
- *Mildura*
- *Moira*
- *Northern Grampians*
- *Strathbogie*
- *Swan Hill*
- *Towong*
- *Wangaratta*
- *West Wimmera*
- *Wodonga*
- *Yarriambiack*