

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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STAYING SAFE FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES THIS SUMMER

Victorians are being reminded to take steps to protect themselves against mosquito-borne diseases this summer, with recent wet and humid weather creating ideal conditions for mosquito breeding.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today called on people enjoying Victoria's great outdoors this holiday season to be mindful of the health risks mosquitoes can pose.

Simple steps you can take to keep yourself and your family safe from mosquito bites include:

- Wearing long, loose-fitting and light-coloured clothing
- Applying insect repellents containing picaridin or DEET on exposed skin
- Avoiding mosquitoes when they are most active, particularly around dawn and dusk
- Making sure your accommodation is fitted with mosquito screens or nets

If camping or caravanning, keep doors and tent flaps closed to stop mosquitos getting in, ensure mosquito screens or nets are intact, and try to avoid camping near wetland habitats where mosquitos are likely breeding.

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus infections increase during the summer period across Victoria, and both are spread by mosquitoes. Symptoms include fever, chills and joint pain. While most people will get better within a few weeks, for some the recovery can take months.

Japanese encephalitis, Murray Valley encephalitis and West Nile virus/Kunjin disease are rare in Victoria but have the potential to cause severe disease. A vaccine is available for Japanese encephalitis for Victorians who meet eligibility criteria.

Melburnians, particularly those living in or visiting coastal areas around the bay and Bellarine and Mornington peninsulas, should also be mindful of Buruli ulcer. Symptoms of infection can take months to develop and may include persistent spots that look like insect bites, ulcers, painful lumps and lasting redness.

The disease has been linked to possums and the main pathway of transmission to humans is via mosquito bites, so take precautions to prevent mosquito bites and avoid contact with wildlife, particularly animals showing signs of a sore or ulcer.

For more information about protecting yourself from mosquito-borne diseases, visit the Better Health Channel and Department of Health websites.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"The recent wet spring followed by hot weather provides mosquitoes with an ideal breeding environment so it's important we all understand the risks."

Media contact: Rick Goodman | rick.goodman@minstaff.vic.gov.au

“The best way to protect yourself against mosquitoes and the diseases they carry is to avoid getting bitten – so cover up, use repellent and limit your time outdoors when lots of mosquitoes are about.”