



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Health Department Recommends Actions to Protect Against Eastern Equine Encephalitis

(Berrien County, MI) – With an increase in cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis reported yesterday throughout the state of Michigan, officials at the Berrien County Health Department continue to emphasize that residents take personal precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a rare virus that is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. As of today, there is one confirmed case of EEE in Berrien County as well as one suspected case that is pending confirmatory testing. To date, there have been seven confirmed cases of EEE throughout the state of Michigan in 2019.

Although there have been elevated numbers of EEE cases in Michigan this year, the illness remains extremely rare. Not all mosquitos are capable of transmitting the virus, and not all cases of EEE result in severe symptoms. Mosquitos that can carry the EEE virus tend to favor woodland and/or swampy habitats. Individual cases of EEE are more likely to occur in those over the age of 50, under the age of 15, or those who may have weakened immune systems from underlying medical conditions or treatments.

At this time, the Berrien County Health Department is not recommending that community groups cancel outdoor evening events, such as sporting events. If practical, groups can consider relocating outdoor events to an indoor space. The Health Department is recommending the following actions be taken:

- When outdoors, apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-registered product to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.

The Berrien County Health Department is working collaboratively with leadership at Berrien County school districts to take actions where needed and communicate directly with students and families.

It is important to remember that while serious, the risk of contracting EEE is very low. As we head into the season where the risk of contracting the flu is relatively much higher, the Health Department continues to urge that families get a flu vaccination for everyone in their household who is 6 months or older.

More information regarding EEE can be found at www.bchdmi.org or www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

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