Town of Brookline

Department of Public Health

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AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT ABOUT MOSQUITO-BORNE VIRUSES

On Wednesday, July 13, 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) identified West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes in traps located in South Brookline. As a result, the risk level is at Moderate, and we conclude that the virus is present throughout the Town.

Mosquito-borne viruses are viruses that are carried and spread by mosquitoes. In this part of the country, public health surveillance is done for two mosquito-borne viruses that can cause encephalitis (swelling of the brain) - West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). The period of highest risk of getting either disease can be from late July through the fall.

Mosquitoes get WNV and EEE by biting infected birds. People and animals can get these diseases by being bitten by an infected mosquito. There is no evidence that a person can get these viruses from handling live or dead infected birds or animals. However, gloves should be worn when handling any dead animals and double plastic bags used to discard them in the trash.

Most people bitten by mosquitoes carrying WNV will experience no symptoms or very mild symptoms and will recover on their own. Persons over 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe WNV disease. People who are bitten by mosquitoes carrying EEE tend to experience more severe symptoms. Severe symptoms of both diseases include high fever, muscle weakness, headache, disorientation, neck stiffness, paralysis, coma, tremors, convulsions and sometimes death. There is currently no vaccine or medical cure for these illnesses. In severe cases intensive medical therapy such as intravenous (IV) fluids and nutrition, and ventilator support can be administered in hospitals.

What is Brookline doing to protect me?

The Brookline Department of Public Health is involved in active surveillance for mosquito-borne viruses. **Please note that dead bird reports are no longer collected by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and dead birds are no longer tested for WNV, as MDPH has determined that tracking and testing of dead birds is not a useful way to monitor WNV activity.** Mosquito collecting and testing, which provide a more reliable indication of current WNV activity, began in early July.

Brookline will be doing the following to address mosquito-borne viruses this summer:

Larvicide has been applied to all catch basins and some wetland areas to prevent hatching of new mosquitoes;
Mosquito traps have been established and mosquito batches are being tested for the virus;
An information line has been established at (617) 730-2295;
Mosquito-borne virus information will appear on the Town website: www.brooklinema.gov/health;
There will be inspection and enforcement of standing water areas in parks, fields, tires, etc;
Spraying to kill adult mosquitoes may be done, only if absolutely necessary, and if recommended by the State. Every effort will be made to notify residents of the spraying beforehand.

What can I do to protect myself?

Avoid Bites! Follow these steps:

Be aware of increased mosquito activity when outdoors between dusk and dawn. If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and socks. Cover baby carriages or playpens that are outdoors with mosquito netting.

When outside, use a mosquito repellent. Repellents that contain DEET are the most effective, although **DEET should not be used on infants**. The CDC also recommends products which contain either the chemical Picaridin, found in Cutter Advanced; or products containing the oil of lemon eucalyptus. Alternatives to DEET that can also be effective for a limited duration (1hour) on the market are: citronella; Avon Skin-So-Soft Plus; Buzz Away, neem oil, and soybean oil. If you need help selecting a repellent, one useful repellent selector tool is available at http://pi.ace.orst.edu/repellents/.

Avoid areas that tend to have a lot of mosquitoes, such as wetlands or swampy areas;
Fix holes in all window and door screens;
Remove standing or stagnant water in your yard where mosquitoes are likely to breed. Check your flower pots, wheelbarrows, garbage cans, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, clogged gutters on your house, old tires, etc.;
Repair leaking pipes and outdoor faucets;
Keep your grass cut short and bushes near your house trimmed so mosquitoes can't hide;

Call the health department if you see standing water problems that are not on your property.

For further information or to report stagnant water (more than 10 days) or other complaints, please call the Brookline Department of Public Health at 617-730-2300.