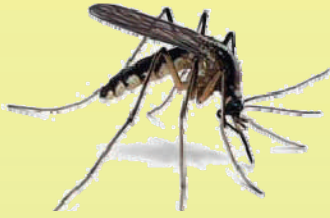


What You Need to Know!

Mosquito Borne Illnesses



The climate of Harris County, Texas makes it an almost perfect home for people...and mosquitoes! Harris County is home to 56 species of mosquitoes, of which 17 transmit diseases. In addition to being a nuisance (no one likes being bitten), some mosquito species are known to transmit diseases. Although most people bitten by infected mosquitoes experience only a slight illness, a small percentage contract a more serious and potentially deadly form of disease. Pets can also be affected by mosquitoes. Some examples of mosquito borne illnesses are:

St. Louis Encephalitis, West Nile Virus

The two primary mosquito-borne illnesses currently of concern in Harris County are St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE) and West Nile Virus (WNV). Both are transmitted to people by the Culex quinquefasciatus mosquito. This mosquito species chooses development sites of heavily polluted water, mostly sewage, and primarily feeds on birds. Wild birds are the carriers of both SLE and WNV. Mosquitoes spread the virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals. Some people experience flu-like symptoms usually 5-15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Individuals thought to have SLE/WNV should contact a physician immediately. A blood test is needed for confirmation and most patients fully recover under the care of a physician.

Dog Heartworm

Heartworm disease is a common mosquito-borne illness found in a variety of animals and is transmitted by three of the most common species in our area. Dogs are most susceptible to this disease and have an 80-90% chance of infection if not on preventative. It is also seen in other common household pets such as cats and ferrets, in wildlife such as coyotes, foxes and raccoons, and is even seen in people in rare instances. Protect our pets! Contact your veterinarian.

Dengue Fever, Malaria, Yellow Fever

These diseases are not common in Harris County but claim the lives of many people around the globe each year. Global travel, urbanization, immigration, climate, and presence of the mosquito species known to transmit these diseases in Harris County are all factors that contribute to the possibility of these diseases re-emerging in our area.

How to Protect Yourself

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent infection. To decrease exposure to mosquitoes and the viruses they may carry, personal protective measures include:

- When outdoors, use an insect repellent containing the active ingredient, DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 and apply as directed on the label. Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts when outdoors particularly at dawn and dusk.
- Remove or empty containers that hold water. Bird baths and pet bowls should be changed twice weekly.
- Keep lawn clippings out of the storm drains. Fill in low areas where water collects.
- Make sure screens on windows and doors are in good condition.
- To control mosquitoes inside a house, use a "flying insect spray". Be sure to use according to directions on the label.

Resources

Harris County Public
Health & Environmental
Services
www.hcphe.org

Texas Department of
State Health Services
www.dshs.state.tx.us

Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

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