

# Preventing Mosquito Bites

*This brochure was produced by the MA Department of Public Health with modifications made by the Town of Lincoln ([www.lincolntown.org](http://www.lincolntown.org))*

## Why is it important to prevent mosquito bites?

Mosquitoes can spread diseases that make you sick. In Massachusetts, mosquitoes can give you Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus and West Nile virus (WNV).



West Nile virus infections are more common than EEE, but still rare. Most WNV infections do not cause any symptoms. Mild WNV infections can cause fever, headache, and body aches, often with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. A small number of people (less than 1 out of 100) who get infected with WNV develop more serious illness; this is more common in people over the age of 50. Symptoms of serious illness can include headache, high fever, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness, tremors, convulsions, coma, swelling of the brain, and sometimes death.

Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) is an extremely rare but serious disease. Symptoms include high fever, stiff neck, headache, and lack of energy. Swelling of the brain, called encephalitis, is the most dangerous complication, and can cause coma and death. Most cases in Massachusetts occur in the southeastern part of the state, but recently there has been an increase in cases occurring in other parts of the state. See your doctor if you develop these symptoms.

## What is the best way to prevent mosquito bites?

- When weather permits, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.
- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many species of mosquitoes. Take extra care to use an EPA-approved repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning. Make sure to follow directions on the repellent label.
- Be aware of mosquitoes around you. If mosquitoes are biting you, reapply repellent, or think about going inside.
- Use mosquito netting on baby carriages or playpens when your baby is outdoors.
- Make sure screens are repaired and are tightly attached to doors and windows.
- Remove standing water from places like gutters, old tires, and wheel barrows. Replace the water frequently in bird baths and wading pools. Mosquitoes can begin to grow in any puddle of standing water that lasts for more than four days, so don't let water collect around your home.

Wear long pants, long sleeves and socks to reduce exposed skin outdoors.



Use an EPA-approved repellent anytime you're outdoors.



Only a small number of mosquitoes are infected at any given time, so being bitten by a mosquito does not mean you will get sick. However, the best way to avoid both of these illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

## What can I do to protect my animals?

Mosquitoes can infect horses and other animals. Horses are susceptible to WNV; and horses, llamas, alpacas, and certain birds can get EEE. WNV and EEE viruses are not spread from horses or other mammals to humans in any way.

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- Licensed vaccines for horses are considered highly protective and can even be used in some other animals. Talk with your veterinarian about vaccinating your animals.
- Eliminate standing water by getting rid of items that can collect and hold water such as flower pots, tires, and containers. Cleaning out (not just topping off) animal water buckets and troughs at least twice weekly will reduce mosquito breeding habitats.
- Consider screening stalls if possible or install fans to help deter mosquitoes.
- Keep animals indoors during peak periods of mosquito activity (dusk and dawn).
- Avoid turning on lights inside barns during the evening and overnight because mosquitoes are attracted to light.
- Apply mosquito repellents approved for use on animals. Read the product label before using, and follow all instructions.

