



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County and public health officials ask for community's help to prevent mosquito-borne illness

Knoxville, Tenn. – Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) and the East Tennessee Regional Health Office (ETRO) of the Tennessee Department of Health are urging residents and business owners to do their part to prevent mosquito-borne illness.

“Our efforts in Knox County will complement and support ongoing work in every county of the state to reduce or eliminate disease-carrying mosquitoes,” said Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett. “We owe it to our neighbors, particularly the very young, senior citizens and those with weakened immune systems, to do our part around our homes and businesses, and to be more deliberate in our personal ‘fight the bite’ efforts.”

Tennessee is home to many types of mosquitoes, including *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*, which are capable of transmitting several serious diseases. At this time, mosquitoes in Tennessee are not transmitting Zika virus disease, which has been associated with birth defects. Mosquitoes here, however, are known carriers of other diseases seen each year in Tennessee, including West Nile virus and La Crosse encephalitis. They can also carry dengue fever, yellow fever and Chikungunya virus although not currently in Tennessee.

“Mosquito season has started in Tennessee, presenting potential health problems for residents who could be bitten by disease-carrying mosquitoes,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “To prevent mosquito breeding spots, we urge residents and business owners to discard or tip over items that can unintentionally hold water. A mosquito can lay her eggs in something as small as a plastic coke bottle top, so tossing these types of items into the trash could help prevent you or someone else from suffering a mosquito bite.”

“Most mosquitoes rarely travel much farther than the length of two football fields, a little more than 200 yards from where they are born. Eliminating breeding grounds can reduce our chances of suffering a mosquito bite, which is not just an itchy irritation, but may cause the spread of potentially serious mosquito-borne diseases,” said ETRO Regional Director Janet Ridley.

“While there’s reason for concern and a need to prevent mosquito breeding places, there’s good news for all of us: Mosquito bites are entirely preventable,” said Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH. “Prevention starts with wearing long, loose and light clothing; treating exposed skin with safe and effective repellents; and using clothing treated with permethrin in risk areas. Now, more than ever, we all need to ‘fight the bite.’”



Officials recommends the following:

- Apply repellants to skin often; these can include lotions, liquids or sprays. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the use of repellants which contain DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane 3, 8-diol and IR3535. The duration of protection varies by repellant; read labels on products to determine when reapplications are necessary for optimal protection. To learn more about insect repellants, visit <http://cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/>.
- Wear long, loose and light-colored shirts and pants and wear socks. Tucking shirts in pants and tucking pants into socks will help form a barrier. Wear closed shoes or boots instead of sandals.
- Treat clothing with permethrin or purchase pretreated permethrin clothing.
- Avoid perfumes, colognes and products with fragrances that might attract mosquitoes.

To prevent mosquitoes from breeding in larger water-holding devices, including bird baths or garden pools, use larvicides such as mosquito torpedoes or mosquito dunks. If used properly, larvicides will not harm birds or animals.

About Knox County Health Department:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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