



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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Single mosquito bite can cause infection, so Public Health urges precautions

Although most people bitten by Southwest Georgia's ever-present mosquitoes don't become sick, each year some residents aren't so lucky.

"Unfortunately, every year around this time, we begin seeing cases of West Nile virus, which is a potentially dangerous mosquito-borne illness for which we have no vaccine," said Southwest Health District Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant. "Only a few years ago, we had a death in the District attributed to West Nile virus."

Last year, eight human cases of West Nile virus were confirmed in Georgia, including cases in Dougherty, Lee and Mitchell Counties, she said. Almost 29,000 people in the US have been reported with West Nile virus disease since 1999, and of those 11,760 have been seriously ill and over 1,100 have died.

"Traditionally, West Nile Virus incidences peak in August, and that's right around the corner," Grant said. "We know mosquitoes infected with West Nile breed here, which is why we recommend to residents of Southwest Georgia that they wear repellent and take other steps to avoid being bitten. At this time of year it is especially important not to drop your guard."

Around 80 percent of those infected with West Nile show no symptoms; while up to 20 percent have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a rash, she said.

"The older you are, the more likely that you could get severely ill if you get infected. People who have received an organ transplant are also at higher risk for severe disease," Grant said. "Young children and people with compromised immune systems are also at increased risk. One out of roughly 150 infected with West Nile virus develop serious symptoms."

There is no vaccine available for West Nile virus, she said.

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

“There is also no specific treatment. People with severe cases are hospitalized and receive supportive care such as intravenous fluids and respiratory treatment,” Grant said. “The best protection is to avoid getting bitten.”

Ways to reduce the risk include:

Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active – at dawn and dusk

Cover exposed skin if you must be outside

Use insect repellent with active ingredients such as DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus or picaridin

Drain standing water

Repair screens

For more information about West Nile Virus, go online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org.

Additional information is available at www.cdc.gov.

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