

September 16, 2009

Dear Parents,

At the request of the Maine Center for Disease Control, the Maine Department of Education has asked that we contact parents about eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). The Maine CDC has created a one-page fact sheet for parents which you can review below.

Suzanne Godin - Superintendent of Schools

What is eastern equine encephalitis (EEE)?

- EEE is a very serious viral infection transmitted to people from the bite of an infected mosquito. One-third of those identified with the symptoms die of the disease, and half of the survivors suffer from permanent brain damage. The disease is especially severe in children and older adults.
- EEE virus is most commonly found in mosquitoes in and near wetlands, especially freshwater hardwood (red maple) and cedar wetlands.
- There is no vaccine or effective treatment for humans. Therefore, prevention strategies are critical.

Where has EEE virus been found in Maine?

- EEE virus was first identified in a horse in Maine in 2005. In the fall of 2008, a man spending time in Cumberland County and a horse from York County died of the disease. In recent days and weeks EEE virus has killed horses in York, Cumberland, Kennebec, Waldo, and Penobscot Counties. These horses mean infected mosquitoes posing a risk to people are present.
- Although the risk of contracting the disease from one particular mosquito bite is very small, since any one mosquito is unlikely to be infected, the risk for contracting EEE is much more widespread geographically than previously thought. All Mainers, schools, and communities should take action.

What can you do to prevent getting infected? PREVENT MOSQUITO BITES!

- Adults and children participating in outdoor activities for a significant amount of time when the temperature is greater than 50 degrees are encouraged to:
- **Cover up** by wearing long sleeves, socks, and pants; and/or
- Use an effective **insect repellent** containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on exposed skin and/or clothing. The repellent/insecticide permethrin can be used on clothing and be effective through several washes. Always follow the package directions.

- Avoid outdoor evening activities when mosquitoes are most actively biting (starting one hour before sunset) if the temperature is over 50 degrees, or make sure to cover up with clothes and/or insect repellent.
- Repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out. Get rid of unnecessary standing water that can serve as mosquito breeding sites. Examples include: empty standing water from flower pots, buckets, barrels and other containers; drill holes in tire swings so water drains out; and keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

For more information:

- Maine CDC EEE Website <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/epi/vector-borne/index.shtml>
- US CDC Insect Repellent Website

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm