



Charlie Crist  
Governor

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***For Immediate Release***

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**MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS ALERT ISSUED FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

***2nd Death Attributed to Eastern Equine Encephalitis Confirmed in Hillsborough County.***

TAMPA FL, -- The Hillsborough County Health Department has elevated the "Mosquito-Borne Illness Advisory" for the county to a "Mosquito-Borne Illness Alert" due to further increased mosquito-borne disease activity. The health department was notified late yesterday afternoon through our disease surveillance system that an infant residing in the Greater Brandon area of Hillsborough County had died from Eastern Equine Encephalitis, (EEE). The specific date of the death is not available at this time.

"Losing a child is one of the most difficult experiences any family can endure, and words of true comfort are hard to find," said Douglas Holt, Director Hillsborough County Health Department. "We offer our deepest condolences to the family for their loss."

This is the second death in the State attributed to Eastern Equine Encephalitis since 2008.

Mosquito-Borne Illness Alerts are declared when additional human cases of locally-acquired endemic or exotic arboviral disease have been confirmed, or when evidence of intense virus transmission activity has been detected in animal surveillance systems.

"Since there is no vaccine to help protect people, we hope that area residents will take every precaution possible to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes this season," said Warren McDougle, Epidemiology Program Manager, Hillsborough County Health Department. "There are numerous mosquito repellents commercially available to include natural products that don't contain DEET."

Surveillance data has indicated a continued rise in arbovirus transmission activity, such as West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). In the past several months, five horses in Hillsborough County have tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis. The presence of this disease in the animal population indicates the increased potential for human infections. The Hillsborough County Health Department is working closely with Hillsborough County Mosquito Control to reduce the risk of mosquito borne disease throughout the County.

The Hillsborough County Health Department first issued a Mosquito-Borne Illness Advisory for the County April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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The Hillsborough County Health Department continues to remind all residents and visitors to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Hillsborough County Mosquito Control and the health department continue surveillance and prevention efforts and encourage everyone to take basic precautions to help limit exposure by following the Florida Department of Health recommendations.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, Florida Department of Health, (FDOH) recommends that individuals remain diligent in their personal prevention efforts. These efforts should include the **"5 D's"** for prevention:

- ◆ **Dusk and Dawn** – Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
- ◆ **Dress** – Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- ◆ **DEET** – When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N, N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) are recommended. Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus are other repellent options.
- ◆ **Drainage** – Check around your home to rid the area of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs. ***Make sure that pools and spas have continuous circulation and appropriate chlorination to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.***

Area physicians should contact their county's health department if they suspect an individual may have contracted a mosquito-borne illness. Department of Health laboratories provide testing services for physicians treating patients with clinical signs of mosquito-borne disease.

Symptoms may include fever, headache, tiredness, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash (on the trunk of the body) and swollen lymph glands.

DOH continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses, including WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE), St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE), malaria and dengue. Residents are encouraged to report dead birds via the web site <http://myfwc.com/bird/>. For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, visit DOH's Environmental Health Website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/arboviral/index.htm>, or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>. You may also call the WNV Hotline at 1-888-880-5782 or contact your local county health department.





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**What is Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE)?**

EEE is a rare disease that is caused by a virus spread by infected mosquitoes. EEE virus (EEEV) is one of a group of mosquito-transmitted viruses that can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). In the United States, approximately 5-10 EEE cases are reported annually.

**How do people get infected with EEEV?**

EEEV is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Disease transmission does not occur directly from person to person.

**Where and when have most cases of EEE occurred?**

Most cases of EEE have been reported from Atlantic and Gulf Coast states. Cases have also been reported from the Great Lakes region. EEE cases occur primarily from late spring through early fall, but in subtropical endemic areas (e.g., the Gulf States), rare cases can occur in winter.

**Who is at risk for infection with EEEV?**

Anyone in an area where the virus is circulating can get infected with EEEV. The risk is highest for people who live in or visit woodland habitats, and people who work outside or participate in outdoor recreational activities, because of greater exposure to potentially infected mosquitoes.

**How soon do people get sick after getting bitten by an infected mosquito?**

It takes 4 to 10 days after the bite of an infected mosquito to develop symptoms of EEE.

**What are the symptoms of EEEV disease?**

Severe cases of EEEV infection (EEE, involving encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain) begin with the sudden onset of headache, high fever, chills, and vomiting. The illness may then progress into disorientation, seizures, and coma. Approximately a third of patients who develop EEE die, and many of those who survive have mild to severe brain damage.

**How is EEE diagnosed?**

Diagnosis is based on tests of blood or spinal fluid. These tests typically look for antibodies that the body makes against the viral infection.

**What is the treatment for EEE?**

There is no specific treatment for EEE. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses, and no effective anti-viral drugs have been discovered. Severe illnesses are treated by supportive therapy which may include hospitalization, respiratory support, IV fluids, and prevention of other infections.

**How can people reduce the chance of getting infected with EEEV?**

Prevent mosquito bites. There is no vaccine or preventive drug.

- Use 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 to protect through several washes. Always follow the directions on the package.

- Wear long sleeves and pants when weather permits.

- Have secure, intact screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.

- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets, barrels, and other containers. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

**What should I do if I think a family member might have EEE?**

Consult your healthcare provider for proper diagnosis.

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