



West Nile Virus Illness: Special Considerations for Homeless Populations

West Nile virus (WNV) illness and other mosquito-borne viral diseases pose a significant risk to homeless populations due to their extensive outdoor exposure and their limited access to preventive measures, which puts them at increased risk for mosquito bites. It is important for people who provide support and care of homeless persons to take action to prevent mosquito bites, especially for individuals over the age of 60, or persons with underlying health conditions who are most likely to develop severe infections. Special considerations include:

Cost:

- Access to insect repellents among all persons with limited financial resources is problematic.
- Community partners, such as mosquito control districts, businesses and not-for-profits may be able to assist with repellent supplies or may have recommendations for lower cost products.

Personal Hygiene:

- Repellents must be applied according to label
- If repellents are supplied the need to follow label requirements must be emphasized in a way that will be understood by the population being served
- Bathing is recommended when returning indoors after using repellents such as DEET that may be applied directly to the skin.
- Homeless populations have limited opportunities to bathe between repellent applications.

Mosquito Bite Prevention:

- Although mosquito-borne illnesses can occur year-round in Florida, highest risk is during summer and fall; mosquito bite prevention is most critical during these seasons
- Applying repellents to clothing may be useful for homeless populations.
 - Protection from one application of the repellent permethrin can last as long as six weeks. Permethrin should not be applied directly on the skin.
- Providing comfortable clothing that covers skin such as socks, long sleeve shirts and pants can further prevent mosquito bites.
- Shelters should maintain intact screens over doors and windows, and encourage staff and residents to not prop open doors and windows unless covered with intact screens.
- The homeless should be encouraged to seek indoor shelter at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes that transmit WNV are most active.
- Targeted mosquito control efforts in areas the homeless congregate may be beneficial including:
 - Maintaining vegetation and picking up debris that can harbor mosquitoes.
 - Regular adulticide and larvicide treatments by mosquito control in areas that the homeless congregate, including near parks and shelters.

For additional information visit:

www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/index.html.