



COMMUNITY HEALTH  
& THE ENVIRONMENT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## BLOCK BUG BITES BY TAKING PRECAUTIONS THIS FALL

### *Use Repellents, Take Steps to Reduce Exposure to Insect-Borne Diseases*

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – As the weather begins to cool in the fall, outdoor activity heats up. With this increase in hiking, camping, sports, community celebrations and other activities also comes a greater opportunity for insect bites and exposure to dangerous illnesses that mosquitoes and ticks may carry.

“In addition to leaving behind an annoying, itchy mark, bites from infected insects can transmit diseases,” said **Ryan Tilley**, director of the St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection. “Although instances of serious illnesses related to insect bites are rare, taking a few simple steps before, during and after any outdoor activity this fall can minimize the exposure risk for your family.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 46 states have reported West Nile virus activity this year, and ticks throughout the country have been found to carry pathogens causing Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and other severe illnesses. About 80% of those who become infected with West Nile virus will not experience any discomfort, but those who do can show symptoms such as fever, headache, body ache, fatigue and rash. In extreme cases, especially involving those 60 or older or who have previous medical conditions, the disease can cause brain inflammation, neck stiffness, seizures, coma and death. Common symptoms associated with tick-borne infection are fever, fatigue, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, severe headaches, nausea/vomiting, and a rash (although a rash might not be present many ehrlichiosis cases). If not treated, these tick-related illnesses can cause long-term health problems, and in extreme cases, death.

The most effective ways for minimizing illnesses from insect bites are to use repellent whenever outdoors and to check for bugs after you return home. An insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus has been proven to provide protection when used according to manufacturer’s instructions. Products containing permethrin can be applied to clothing but should not have direct contact with skin. In addition, those outdoors should wear long sleeved shirts/jackets, long pants and should tuck pants into socks to minimize exposure. When returning from the outdoors, check for insects on your body (ticks prefer to settle in dark, warm areas such as hair, behind ears, and along the armpits, groin or back of the knee) and your pet, and remove them immediately (using tweezers to ensure you remove the entire creature). For additional tips on preventing insect bites, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/features/StopMosquitoes/>.

To help decrease the mosquito population in St. Charles County, the Division of Environmental Health and Protection inspects problem areas and applies treatment when surveillance systems or public alerts notify of problems. Staff targets habitat areas to control larvae before they develop and treats adult populations with insecticide. Residents who would like tips on minimizing mosquito activity in their neighborhoods should visit <http://www.sccmo.org/959/Vector-Mosquito-Control> or contact St. Charles County’s mosquito control program at (636) 949-1800 to request treatment.

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