7 December 2017

**Prevent the mozzie swat dance this festive season**

Recent rainfall has been great for gardens and for creating mosquito breeding grounds.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service Public Health doctor Shaun Hosein said the wet conditions over the past few weeks could cause an increase in mosquito numbers throughout the Sunshine Coast region in the coming weeks and holiday season.

Dr Hosein said it was very important to protect yourself and family from mosquito bites and prevent further mosquito breeding.

He said Ross River and Barmah Forest were two viral illnesses which could be caught from Sunshine Coast mosquitoes.

So far this year for residents of the Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Gympie council areas there have been 363 reported cases of Ross River virus, which is higher than the five year average at this time of year of 295. These numbers can vary from year to year and are influenced by numerous factors such as rainfall, increased temperatures and frequent very high tides.

There have been 49 reported cases of Barmah Forest Virus this year, where the five year average at this time of year is 124.

Dr Hosein said he was concerned about the health risk to residents due to the potential increase in mosquitoes and mosquito-borne illness.

“Please cover up with long loose clothing and take precautions against mosquito bites, especially when camping, fishing or enjoying other outdoor activities over the upcoming holiday season,” he said.

“Different types of disease-carrying mosquitoes can bite at different times of the day, so it’s important to be vigilant at all times.

“Please inspect and remove any standing water from around your home or yard, since these serve as a mosquito breeding sites.”

**Tips to prevent bites and protect your health**

- Wear long, loose and light coloured clothing.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin, particularly during dusk and dawn hours when most mosquitoes are active. Read and follow repellent label directions, especially for infants and children.
- Install or repair insect screens on doors and windows, especially in sleeping areas.
If you become unwell with high fevers, rash or joint pain please seek medical advice from your general practitioner or from 13 HEALTH.

**Tips to prevent mosquito breeding and protect your home**

Regularly check around your home, especially following wet weather for evidence of mosquitoes, larvae and mosquito breeding environments. You can:

- Tip out, and wipe out any standing water from things like plastic containers, tarpaulins or buckets.
- Store anything that can hold water undercover or in a dry place, including work equipment, surplus materials or trailers, and keep bins covered.
- Throw out any rubbish lying around like unused or empty containers, tyres, and keep worksites tidy.

Under the *Public Health Act 2005*, you could be fined by your local council if your home or yard promotes the breeding of mosquitoes.


**ENDS**

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