

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

Town of Stoneham Health Department

Addresses Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) Concerns

[Wakefield, MA, 09/05/2023] - The Town of Stoneham Health Department is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its residents and visitors. As we continue to face warmer months and a potential increase in mosquito activity, it is essential to raise awareness about the risks associated with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE).

What is Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)?

Eastern Equine Encephalitis is a rare but serious disease caused by a virus. It primarily affects birds, often without any signs of illness in these animals. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite infected birds. While humans and certain mammals like horses can become infected, they do not contribute to the spread of the disease.

How is the EEE Virus Spread?

The virus responsible for EEE is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. In Massachusetts, these infected mosquitoes are most often found in and around freshwater, hardwood swamps. For detailed information about the types of mosquitoes that can transmit the virus, please visit www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito.

How Common is EEE in Massachusetts?

EEE is a very rare disease in Massachusetts. Since its first identification in the state in 1938, there have been just over 115 reported cases. While historically most cases have been in Bristol, Plymouth, and Norfolk counties, outbreaks can occur across the state in active years. Outbreaks tend to surface every 10-20 years, lasting two to three years.

The most recent outbreak of EEE began in 2019, resulting in twelve cases, including six fatalities. The outbreak continued in 2020, with five cases and one fatality.

Symptoms of EEE

The initial symptoms of EEE include high fever (often 103° to 106°F), a stiff neck, headache, and fatigue. These symptoms typically appear three to ten days after a mosquito bite. The most frequent and severe complication is encephalitis, which is inflammation and swelling of the brain. EEE can progress rapidly, with some patients falling into a coma within a week.

Treatment for EEE

Currently, there is no specific treatment for EEE. In Massachusetts, approximately half of the individuals identified with EEE have died from the infection. Survivors often face permanent disabilities, and very few recover entirely.

Protecting Yourself from EEE

To minimize the risk of contracting EEE, it is crucial to take precautions against mosquito bites:

- Schedule outdoor activities to avoid dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks, and shoes.
- Use an EPA-approved mosquito repellent on exposed skin and clothing. Follow product label instructions.
- Ensure that your home is mosquito-proof by repairing screens and securing doors and windows.
- Eliminate sources of standing water around your property, as mosquitoes breed in stagnant water. If you see sources of standing water on private or public property, **please notify Stoneham Health Department.**

Additional Information

For further information, including tips on selecting and using mosquito repellents safely, please refer to the MDPH Mosquito Repellents fact sheet, available online at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito.

Residents are encouraged to stay informed and take preventive measures to protect themselves and their families. By working together and taking these precautions, we can reduce the risk of Eastern Equine Encephalitis and ensure a safer environment for all.

For More Information, Contact:

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