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Lee health officials confirm case of chikungunya fever

Residents urged to take precautions to avoid mosquito-borne illnesses

Lee County, FL— The Florida Department of Health in Lee County today confirmed a case of imported chikungunya fever, a disease spread by bites from infected mosquitoes. If a person is infected and bitten by a mosquito, that mosquito may later spread the infection by biting another person.

Lee County's first imported case of chikungunya was in a 71-year-old male who recently visited the Dominican Republic. Chikungunya lives in daytime biting mosquitoes, so residents are encouraged to use insect repellent during the day, as well as at dusk and dawn.

"Avoiding mosquito bites is the key to preventing infection with chikungunya and other mosquito-borne diseases," said Jennifer Roth, DOH-Lee epidemiologist. "Floridians and visitors are encouraged to take precautionary measures to help reduce the chance of being bitten. Remember to drain and cover."

Now that many residents are experiencing daily rains, people are encouraged to check daily around the outside of their homes for standing water and drain any water that's found. Draining bromeliad plants is also encouraged.

DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and long-sleeves.
- Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
- Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are effective.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out.

- Keep mosquitoes out of your house. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

People at increased risk for severe disease include newborns exposed during delivery, older adults (≥ 65 years), and people with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, etc. Symptoms of chikungunya include sudden onset of high fever ($>102^{\circ}\text{F}$), severe joint pain mainly in the arms and legs, headache, muscle pain, back pain and rash. Symptoms appear on average three to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Most patients feel better after a few days or weeks, however, some people may develop long-term effects. Complications are more common in infants younger than a year old; those older than 65; and people with chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.

Anyone who experiences symptoms of chikungunya fever should consult with their health care provider immediately and protect oneself against further mosquito bites. Avoiding mosquito bites while sick will help to protect others from getting infected.

People traveling to the Caribbean by cruise ship, airplane or private vessel should remember to wear protective clothing and use repellent throughout their visit.

For more information on chikungunya, visit the Florida Department of Health at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/chikungunya.html> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/> and www.leechd.com

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