



Media Release

Hunter New England communities urged to protect themselves from mosquitoes this summer

20 December 2023

Hunter New England Local Health District is urging communities across the region to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

Hunter New England Public Health Physician, Dr David Durrheim, said mosquitoes can carry and spread viruses that lead to serious illness, but people can take precautions to avoid being bitten.

"It is really important to protect yourself from mosquito bites as mosquitoes can spread viruses including Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses," Dr Durrheim said.

"Symptoms following infection can include painful swollen joints; skin rashes; fever; fatigue; headaches and swollen lymph nodes. The fatigue and painful joints can persist for weeks and even months.

In some parts the state mosquitoes sometimes also carry infections that causes severe disease, such as Japanese Encephalitis, Kunjin and Murray Valley Encephalitis.

In NSW, a free JEV vaccination is available for people aged two months or older who live or routinely work in 55 regional Local Government Areas with identified JEV risk, including Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth, Tenterfield, Upper Hunter, **AND:**

- regularly spend time outdoors placing them at risk of mosquito bites, **OR**
- are experiencing homelessness, **OR**
- are living in conditions with limited mosquito protection (e.g. tents, caravans, dwellings with no insect screens), **OR**
- are engaging in prolonged outdoor flood recovery (clean-up) efforts, including repeated professional or volunteer deployments.

"The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes altogether."

Simple actions to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear when outside.
- Use an effective insect repellent on exposed skin and reapply within a few hours. The best mosquito repellents contain Diethyl Toluamide (DEET), Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Most repellents are safe for use on children aged 3 months and older when used according to directions. Infants aged less than 3 months can be protected from mosquitoes by using an infant carrier draped with mosquito netting that is secured along the edges. For more information, visit the NSW Health website.

- Use insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units (indoors) and mosquito coils (outdoors) to clear rooms or repel mosquitoes from an area.
- Cover all windows, doors, vents and other entrances with insect screens.
- Remove any water-holding containers outside the house where mosquitoes could breed.

View further [information on mosquito-borne disease and ways to protect yourself](#).

Fact sheets on specific mosquito-borne diseases, including Japanese encephalitis, Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus, are available on [Vector borne disease fact sheets](#).