

4 January, 2013

## South Eastern Sydney Local Health District warning on mosquito viruses

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is warning residents in the local area to take extra precautions and protect themselves against mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases over the summer period.

The District's Public Health Director, Professor Mark Ferson, said the summer months may bring ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes which carry viruses causing human diseases such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus.

"Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus are spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals. Symptoms may include tiredness, rash, fever, and sore and swollen joints. While these symptoms usually subside after several days, some people may experience these symptoms for weeks, or even months.

"There is no specific treatment for these viruses. The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten," Professor Ferson said.

"Avoiding mosquito bites is especially important now and until at least after Easter when many people may be enjoying outdoor activities such as camping or fishing in areas with high mosquito numbers," he said.

Simple steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes include:

- Avoid being outside, unprotected, when mosquitoes are common at dawn and dusk. When outside, cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.
- Apply mosquito repellent regularly to exposed areas (as directed on the container). Repellents containing Diethyl Toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are best.
- Don't use repellents on the skin of children under the age of three months. Instead use physical barriers such as netting on prams, cots and play areas for babies.
- Eradicate mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as containers that hold water.
- Use flyscreens on windows and doors of houses and keep them in good order.
- When camping, use flyscreens, or sleep under mosquito nets.

"The Public Health Unit is monitoring notified cases of Ross River and Barmah Forest virus infection as in previous years to determine numbers of cases, and in particular, whether it seems likely the infection has been acquired locally or elsewhere.

"Local mosquito trapping around the Georges River will start this month, with dates to be determined by scientific staff at Westmead Hospital's Department of Medical Entomology," Professor Ferson said.

For a copy of the NSW Health fact sheets on Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and Murray Valley Encephalitis go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/rossriver.html>

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/barmah\\_forest\\_virus.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/barmah_forest_virus.html)

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/murray\\_valley\\_enceph.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/murray_valley_enceph.html)

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**South Eastern Sydney Local Health District**

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