

25 January, 2013

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District warning on high numbers of potentially disease-causing mosquitoes around the Georges River

In the lead up to the Australia Day long weekend, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is warning residents and visitors to the Georges River area to take extra precautions and protect themselves against mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases.

This is particularly important for people enjoying outdoor activities such as camping or fishing in areas with high mosquito numbers.

The District's Public Health Director, Professor Mark Ferson said that the latest trapping around the Georges River had shown a high number of the saltmarsh mosquito, *Aedes vigilax*, following predicted high tides. These mosquitoes have the potential to carry viruses causing human diseases such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus infection.

"Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus are spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals. Symptoms of infection in humans 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," Professor Ferson said.

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

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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healthdirect AUSTRALIA – providing expert health advice 24 hours a day to NSW residents – Tel. 1800 022 222

For local South Eastern Sydney data, issued on a monthly basis, on notifications with Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus infections go to:

http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Public_Health/surveillance/default.asp and click on 'Arbovirus surveillance report.' The report for January will be published in early February.

For a copy of the NSW Health fact sheets on Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus infections go to:

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

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/barmah_forest_virus.html

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