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## OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH OFFICIALS EMPHASIZE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO HELP PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

**OKALOOSA COUNTY** – The Okaloosa County Health Department (OCHD) encourages residents and visitors to take precautionary measures to help prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. "It is important for people to protect themselves," said Dr Karen Chapman, Director of the OCHD. "Given the recent health advisories in Walton and Escambia Counties for mosquito-borne diseases, I feel it is prudent to urge our community to eliminate potential breeding sites of mosquitoes -- as well as to take personal protection measures."

### TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES, REMEMBER "DRAIN & COVER"

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots, or any other container where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances, and other items that are not being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets' water bowls at one or two times a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that do not accumulate water. Pump out bilges on boats.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and keep appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.
- Cover skin with clothing or repellent.
- Wear shoes, socks, and long pants & long-sleeves. (This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.)
- Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always read label directions carefully. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months of age.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

### TIPS ON REPELLENT USE

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET are generally recommended. These products are generally available at local pharmacies.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is appropriate: DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old, and oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children less than 3 years old.
- Do not allow young children to apply repellent to themselves; have an adult apply it. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing. Do not apply repellent to the eyes or mouth, cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing or gear. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.

DOH continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses. To read frequently asked questions about repellants and mosquito-borne illnesses, visit [www.HealthyOkaloosa.com](http://www.HealthyOkaloosa.com), or call the Environmental Health Division at the OCHD at (850) 833-9247.

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