



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Avoiding Bug Bites

West Nile Virus and Other Arboviral Diseases — United States, 2011

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Biting insects not only ruin many outdoor activities, but they can also cause severe diseases. Arboviruses are usually transmitted by the bites of infected mosquitoes and ticks, and illness can range from mild fever to encephalitis or meningitis.

Dr. Stephanie Yendell is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. She's joining us today by telephone to discuss ways to avoid these viral diseases. Welcome to the show, Stephanie.

[Dr. Yendell] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stephanie, what are the most common arboviruses?

[Dr. Yendell] Arboviruses or viruses that are spread by ticks and mosquitoes cause illness in a substantial number of people each year. West Nile Virus is the most common arbovirus in the continental United States. However, LaCrosse virus is the most common arbovirus among children and Dengue is the most common arbovirus in some US Territories such as Puerto Rico. West Nile Virus can be found throughout most of the US while other Arboviruses are more regional. For example, LaCrosse Virus is found in the upper-Midwest and along the Appalachian Mountains.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are these viruses seasonal?

[Dr. Yendell] Yes. In the United States people who get infected with arboviruses usually get sick during summer months when ticks and mosquitoes are most active.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stephanie, what are the symptoms of an arboviral disease?

[Dr. Yendell] There's a wide range of symptoms with arboviral diseases. Most people who are infected with an arbovirus will not show symptoms at all. For the people who do get sick most will have a fever and may also have a headache, rash, or body aches. These symptoms can last from a few days to several weeks. A small number of people will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, neck stiffness, and even a coma. If listeners or their family members develop symptoms that concern them they should talk to a health-care provider and be sure to mention any recent tick or

mosquito bites. Unfortunately, there are no specific treatments for diseases caused by arboviruses. Therefore it is important to avoid insect bites to prevent arboviral diseases.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some strategies for avoiding biting insects?

[Dr. Yendell] When going outside during the summer months it is important to use insect repellent. Look for lotions, sprays, and other products that contain an effective repellent such as Deet, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to use on exposed skin. Products with the ingredient Permethrin can be used on clothing. Read the label carefully and find out which insects the product repels and how often it should be reapplied. Insect bites can also be avoided by wearing protective clothing such as long sleeves and pants. Removing standing water from the yard and mowing the lawn frequently can also help reduce the number of ticks and mosquitoes in your home.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stephanie, where can listeners get more information about preventing arboviral diseases?

[Dr. Yendell] For more information, listeners can visit www.cdc.gov and enter “Fight the Bite” in the search box. In addition, your local health department can be a resource for more information on preventing bug bites and diseases transmitted by insects.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Stephanie. Today I’ve been talking with CDC’s Dr. Stephanie Yendell about preventing diseases caused by biting insects. Remember, to prevent bites from mosquitoes or ticks wear protective clothing, apply insect repellent to exposed body parts, and eliminate insect breeding sites, such as standing water. If you think you may have an illness from a mosquito or tick bite, contact your health-care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.