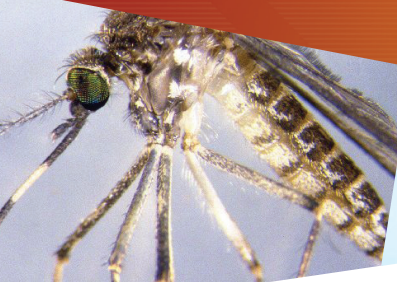




Mosquito-borne diseases



Culex mosquito © 1999 Richard C. Russell

HEALTH WARNING

The mosquito-borne diseases that are of concern in Western Australia are:

- Ross River virus disease
- Barmah Forest virus disease
- Kunjin virus disease
- Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE).

These diseases are caused by viruses that are transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. They cannot be caught by direct contact with another person or animal.

Dengue fever and malaria are not currently transmitted in Western Australia.

The Department of Health advises people living, working and travelling north and east of Perth in Western Australia to take extra care against mosquito bites following the detection of the MVE virus and closely related Kunjin virus in the Midwest, Wheatbelt, Goldfields, Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne regions.

In addition, cases of Ross River and Barmah Forest virus diseases continue to be notified in people from across much of Western Australia.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of Ross River and Barmah Forest virus diseases can be debilitating and include:

- painful and/or swollen joints
- sore muscles
- aching tendons
- skin rashes
- fever
- tiredness
- headaches
- swollen lymph nodes.

Symptoms of MVE and Kunjin virus disease can be severe and include:

- fever
- drowsiness
- bad headache
- stiff neck
- nausea and vomiting
- dizziness
- muscle tremors.

RESPONSE

People experiencing these symptoms should seek medical advice quickly. In severe cases, people may experience fits, lapse into a coma, and could be left with permanent brain damage or die.

REDUCING THE RISK

There are no specific cures or vaccines for any of these mosquito-borne diseases so it is very important that people take care to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes and avoid mosquito habitats where possible.

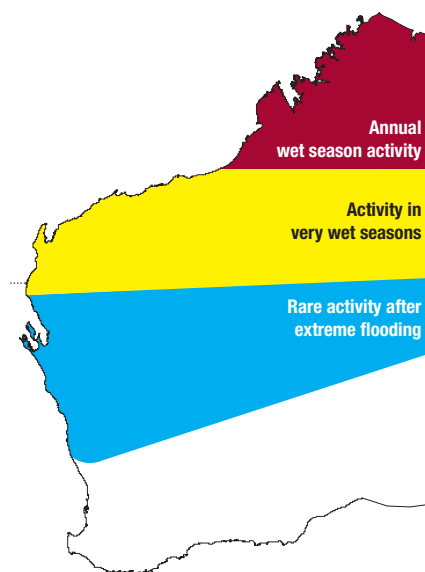
Mosquitoes are most prevalent:

- at dusk and night
- where there are large bodies of water
- where there is stagnant water
- during warm weather.

Some seasonal weather patterns promote mosquito activity and increase the risk.

Controlling mosquitoes in most rural and remote regions of Western Australia is generally not possible because of the large size and inaccessibility of the natural mosquito breeding habitat. However, the risk of contracting mosquito-borne viruses can be reduced by taking a few simple precautions.

- Avoid outdoor exposure during periods of greatest mosquito activity, which are generally one to three hours after sunset and again around dawn.
- Wear long, loose-fitting and light-coloured clothing to prevent mosquito bites.
- Apply a personal insect repellent to exposed skin or clothing, and read the manufacturer's instructions to determine the method and frequency of application. The most effective and long-lasting formulations are lotions or gels containing diethyl toluamide (DEET) at 5 to 20 per cent or Picaridin. Most natural or organic



MVE risk areas

repellents are not as effective as DEET or Picaridin, and need to be reapplied more frequently.

- Ensure insect screens are installed and completely mosquito-proof. Mosquito bed nets provide additional protection. When camping, use mosquito-proof tents or cover swags with mosquito nets.
- Adult mosquitoes are susceptible to desiccation (drying out) and are less active in windy conditions so, where possible, locate camp sites or accommodation villages away from mosquito habitats, particularly locations that may be very sheltered and the air is likely to be still.
- Ensure the drainage system at camp sites or accommodation villages does not allow water to accumulate and stagnate.

For further information, visit www.public.health.wa.gov.au or contact the Department of Health's Mosquito-Borne Disease Control Branch.