



Epi Watch

A Monthly Epidemiology Newsletter



**Division of Disease Control
EXTRA EDITION**

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**Pinellas County Health
Department**

205 Dr. M.L.King Street North
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-6900

www.PinellasHealth.com

Director

John P. Heilman, MD, MPH
john_heilmanmd@doh.state.fl.us

Assistant Director

Claude M. Dharamraj, MD, MPH
claudedharamraj@doh.state.fl.us

Disease Control Division

Director

Deborah A. Healey, RN, MPH
debbie_healey@doh.state.fl.us

Epidemiology Program Manager

Julia Gill, PhD, MPH
julia_gill@doh.state.fl.us

**Florida Epidemic Intelligence
Service Fellow**

Maria N. Donnelly, MSPH
maria_donnelly@doh.state.fl.us

HIV/AIDS Program Manager

Lisa Cohen, BS
lisa_cohen@doh.state.fl.us

STD Program Manager

Sherry Lewis, BS
sherry_lewis@doh.state.fl.us

TB Program Manager

Robert Berger, BA
robert_berger@doh.state.fl.us

To report diseases or request
information call:

(Mon-Fri, 8-5, Area code 727):	
Epidemiology	824-6932
Hepatitis	824-6932
HIV/AIDS	824-6964
Immunizations	824-6936
STD	824-6911
Tuberculosis	824-6953
Non-business hours	824-6900

Epi Watch is a monthly newsletter produced and distributed by the Pinellas County Health Department Epidemiology Program.

Notice to Health Care Practitioners :
Mosquito Borne Illness Health Advisory

Floridians are at increased risk for mosquito borne diseases because our sub-tropical climate is hospitable to both mosquitoes and humans. In general, for mosquito borne diseases to become established in a geographical location, there must be an area for the mosquitoes to live and breed, there must be an appropriate disease reservoir and there must be humans who are susceptible to illness. Illness in humans can be prevented by affecting the components of disease transmission such as by mosquito control programs, eliminating mosquito habitats around human dwellings and preventing mosquito bites.

Arboviruses, such as West Nile virus (WNV), St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) and Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) are transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The Pinellas County Mosquito Control Division maintains chicken flocks located throughout the county to monitor arboviral activity. During the week ending July 8, 2005 four chickens tested positive for WNV and an additional seven sentinel chickens seroconverted during the week ending July 15. This indicates that WNV is present in the community; however there have been no reported human cases of WNV in Pinellas County.

Dengue is a mosquito borne virus not commonly seen in Florida but is endemic to areas of the tropics. Recently, residents of Pinellas County who traveled to Costa Rica and Puerto Rico have contracted dengue while overseas. Additional cases of imported dengue have occurred in Palm Beach County. The last indigenous dengue epidemics in the Tampa Bay and Jacksonville areas occurred during the 1920's and resulted in over 4000 cases. Mosquito control programs were central to eliminating domestic dengue and preventing the re-establishment of this disease. Physicians are a vital component in preventing reestablishment of this illness through prompt recognition and reporting of imported cases of dengue.

Symptoms of mosquito borne diseases are variable but can range from an asymptomatic infection to a febrile illness, meningitis and/or encephalitis. Those infected with the virus that causes dengue can also present with a hemorrhagic illness. Patients should notify their medical care provider of recent travel history if they experience any illness subsequent to travel. In addition, medical care providers should routinely inquire about recent travel during the history and physical. Physicians should promptly report suspected cases of WNV and dengue to the Pinellas County Health Department in order to try to prevent additional cases and to facilitate rapid specialized testing through the Florida Department of Health Public Health Laboratories.

Although these illnesses are unique in their etiology, they can all be prevented in the same manner. Whether at home or overseas, the most effective means of preventing exposure to a mosquito borne illness is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by practicing the "5 D's (and one S) of Prevention"

- Avoid the outdoors during **dusk** and **dawn** when mosquitoes are most active
- **D**ress in light colored long sleeved shirts and pants
- Apply insect repellent containing **DEET**
- **D**rain standing water which provides a breeding ground for mosquitoes
- Maintain screens on windows and porches in good repair to keep mosquitoes outside

Although there is no vaccine for WNV or dengue, those traveling overseas should receive all recommended pre-travel vaccinations and be aware of the diseases present in their intended destination(s).

Further information on mosquito borne illnesses, their symptomology, prevention and travel advisories can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov and the Florida Department of Health website at www.doh.state.fl.us. The Pinellas County Health Department Disease Control Division is available at 727-824-6932 for additional questions and/or notification of reportable disease and conditions.

"The reason for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on a disease is to control that disease. Collection and analysis should not be allowed to consume resources if action does not follow." Foegel, W.H. et al. (1976). Int. J of Epidemiology, 5:29-