

3 April 2020

Take precautions to avoid mosquito bites

South Western Sydney Local Health District is urging people to take extra precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases, particularly in areas around the Georges River.

The District's Public Health Unit Director Dr Naru Pal said mosquito trapping around the Georges River last week showed high numbers of mosquitos, including the saltmarsh mosquito *Aedes vigilax*.

The NSW Arbovirus Surveillance and Mosquito Monitoring Program recently detected Barmah Forest Virus in mosquitoes around this area.

"Barmah Forest virus and Ross River virus are spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals," Dr Pal said. "Symptoms 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."

Members of the public should see their local doctor if they experience these symptoms. Dr Pal said there was no specific treatment for these viruses. "The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten," Dr Pal said.

Simple steps to avoid mosquito bites 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. Those containing oil of lemon eucalyptus also provide adequate protection.
- 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.
- Use insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units (indoors) and mosquito coils (outdoors) to clear rooms or repel mosquitoes from an area. 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.

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

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Barmah_Forest_virus_infection.aspx

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Ross-River-Fever.aspx>

The 2019-20 budget for SWSLHD is almost \$2 billion, an increase of nearly \$94 million on the previous financial year's budget.