



## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Southwest Michigan, Including Barry County**

Southwest Michigan is experiencing activity of a rare, deadly mosquito-borne disease known as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). As of September 17, there have been 7 confirmed cases of EEE in humans, including one (1) case in Barry County. The Barry-Eaton District Health Department would like to remind residents that human cases of EEE are rare, usually averaging around 7 cases per year in the United States. However, the presence of EEE activity in the Southwest Region of Michigan is of concern, thus, precautions to prevent exposure to mosquitos should be taken.

People can become infected with the EEE virus from the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus. Most who are infected with the virus that causes EEE do not become ill. However, persons below the age of 15 or above the age of 50 years have greater risk of developing a severe infection that has high potential for permanent brain damage or death. Barry County residents will continue to be at risk for EEE infection until the first frost decreases mosquito populations. The risk of bites from infected mosquitoes is highest for people who work or play outdoors in these areas. Wearing insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET, or one of the other active ingredients listed below, when outdoors (especially at dawn and dusk), is important to prevent EEE.

Early symptoms of EEE include the sudden onset of headache, high fever, chills, body and joint aches. Symptoms usually appear 4-10 days after exposure. EEE can develop into severe encephalitis (brain swelling), resulting in headache, disorientation, tremors, seizures and paralysis. Permanent brain damage, coma and death may also occur in some cases.

All residents of and visitors to areas where virus activity has been identified are at risk of infection with EEE. To prevent mosquito bites, the following precautions should be taken:

- Use an insect repellent registered by the EPA, containing one of the following active ingredients: **DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, Para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone** on exposed skin and/or clothing. To find out if an insect repellent is registered by the EPA, visit [epa.gov/insect-repellents](http://epa.gov/insect-repellents).
- Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months old. Instead, dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs. Cover strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting. Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD) on children under 3 years old.
- Avoid outdoor activities from dusk until dawn
- Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks with shoes when weather permits.
- Have secure screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets, barrels and other containers.

Additionally, municipal, community, and school leaders should consider taking the following actions:

- When possible, consider rescheduling, relocating, or cancelling outdoor activities from dusk until dawn until the first frost of the season.

- If outdoor events are planned between dusk and dawn, attendees should be encouraged to protect themselves with insect repellents that include the ingredients listed above.
- Eliminate sources of standing water around your respective institutions and jurisdictions.
- Reiterate these messages on your social media platforms.

For more information on EEE activity in Michigan, visit [michigan.gov/eee](http://michigan.gov/eee). To learn more about EEE and how to prevent mosquito bites, visit [cdc.gov/eee](http://cdc.gov/eee).

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