



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Lisa Yarbrough  
415-533-8381

**As Opportunities to Spend Time Outdoors and Travel Increase, Mosquito Experts Encourage Residents to Protect Themselves From Mosquito-Borne Diseases**

*Mosquito Awareness Week educates California residents about how they can help prevent the spread of mosquito-transmitted viruses*

**SACRAMENTO, APRIL 14, 2021** -- With stay-at-home orders being lifted throughout the state, [mosquito experts](#) encourage residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites. As people spend more time outdoors and start traveling again, especially internationally, there is an even greater need to take precautions to prevent the spread of mosquito-transmitted diseases.

“With rising COVID vaccination rates, we are all anxious to safely spend time outside and start exploring after this spring,” said Dr. Richard Pan, State Senator representing the Sacramento region. “Mosquitoes can carry serious diseases such as West Nile virus, but we can keep ourselves and our neighborhoods safe by wearing EPA-registered insect repellent and removing all stagnant water around our homes. Please Fight the Bite so we can enjoy our amazing California outdoors.”

West Nile virus, spread by *Culex* mosquitoes, is the most prevalent and serious mosquito-borne disease in California. There is no human vaccine for West Nile virus, a disease which can cause debilitating cases of meningitis, encephalitis, and even death. In 2020, there were 231 human West Nile virus disease cases from 26 counties in California, including 11 human deaths. Since 2003, more than 7,000 human disease cases were reported including more than 300 deaths.

To raise awareness and educate Californians about the public health threat mosquitoes pose to our communities, Mosquito Awareness Week is observed April 18-24, 2021.

“As the weather warms up and residents head outside, it’s important to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites,” said Truc Dever, president of the [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#). “Doing a weekly check around your yard and dumping and draining all standing water is an easy way to eliminate mosquitoes in your community.”

Climate change has facilitated the spread of two invasive mosquito species, *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*, throughout the state, and they are now in over 20 counties. *Aedes* mosquitoes can be an extreme nuisance and exploit small, previously unnoticed water sources, often living in people’s backyards and patios—areas where mosquito and vector control

districts can't easily inspect. Invasive *Aedes* are vectors of Zika, dengue, chikungunya, yellow fever, and dog heartworm. Travel-associated cases of Zika, dengue, and chikungunya infections in California were lower in 2020 than in previous years due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, but cases have the potential to rise with increased travel. There are no human vaccines for chikungunya and Zika viruses, both of which are costly to treat and can have long-term health and financial consequences.

### **To help prevent mosquito bites:**

- Apply insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients, including DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535, to clothes and exposed skin according to label instructions. Repellents keep mosquitoes from biting. It is important to follow EPA and CDC guidelines for the safe use of repellents on children.
- Dress in long sleeves and pants, especially if outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes that can spread West Nile virus are most active.
- Install screens on windows and doors and keep them in good repair to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including in flowerpots, old tires, buckets, pet dishes, and trash cans. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in very small amounts of standing water.
- Repair leaking faucets and broken sprinklers that can contribute to standing water around your home.
- Clean rain gutters clogged with leaves.
- Report neglected swimming pools and day-biting mosquitoes to your local mosquito and vector control agency (agency information can be found at [www.mvcac.org](http://www.mvcac.org))

To learn more check out the [videos in Spanish and English on the MVCAC website](#) and for additional information on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases, please visit the [California Department of Public Health](#).

### **About MVCAC**

*The [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#) (MVCAC) is the statewide voice for mosquito and vector control professionals. The association provides public health information, expertise, mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance, innovative research, professional training, effective legislative and regulatory advocacy on behalf of California public agencies.*