

Avoiding Mosquito Bites

Mosquito bites can be more than just a nuisance as some can also transmit diseases. The most common disease passed on by mosquitoes in South Australia is Ross River virus. Other serious infections transmitted by mosquitoes include viral encephalitis, Barmah Forest virus infection, dengue fever (in Northern Queensland and in tropical countries around the world) and malaria (in tropical countries around the world).

People can contract Ross River virus or Barmah Forest virus from certain species of infected mosquitoes in South Australia throughout the year, although most infections occur in the warmer months. The most common areas are along the River Murray, Murray Lakes, Coorong and parts of the upper Spencer Gulf. However, this should not stop people visiting these areas as simple protection measures are very effective at preventing mosquito bites.

Following this simple advice will reduce the chance of mosquito bites and reduce the number of mosquitoes in the immediate environment.

Self protection from mosquito bites is the key to prevention.

Personal protection

- > Cover up with long, loose fitting clothing of sufficient thickness to prevent mosquitoes biting through the fabric.
- > Avoid exposure outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.
- > Use an insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin (the most effective repellents contain 5-20% di-ethyl-N-toluamide or DEET) on exposed skin. Apply in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid using on babies and toddlers.
- > Use flyscreens and mosquito nets in accommodation where there are no flyscreens, especially for babies. (This is particularly important when camping out, as repellents are only effective for around four hours.)
- > Avoid mosquito-prone areas.

General mosquito control measures – eliminating mosquito breeding sites

Mosquitoes breed in still water (fresh, salty or stagnant). Stop mosquitoes breeding by cleaning up mosquito breeding sites around the home:

- > Dispose of all containers which hold water, or cover or put holes in them.
- > Empty pot plant drip trays once a week or put sand around pot bases to absorb water.
- > Empty bird baths and pet drinking water at least every three days.
- > Boats, canoes and dinghies should be overturned or have the drain plug removed so that they do not hold water after rain.
- > Screen all openings to tanks, wells or other large water containers with wire gauze no coarser than 1mm mesh.
- > Keep roof gutters in good repair and regularly remove leaves and debris so that pools of water do not form.
- > Dispose of all waste water in such a way that no ponding occurs. Keep all open drains and channels free from obstruction, especially weeds, grass and other debris.
- > Keep fish ponds, ornamental ponds, dams and unused swimming pools stocked with fish which will eat mosquito larvae. Goldfish or Australian native fish are recommended.
- > Keep swimming pools disinfected or salted.

- > **Ross River Virus**
- > **Barmah Forest Virus**
- > **Dengue Fever**
- > **Malaria**
- > **Murray Valley Encephalitis Virus**

Useful website

- > **Fight the Bite**
<http://www.health.sa.gov.au/PEHS/publications/mozzies-fight-bite.htm>