PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Mosquitoes in Massachusetts

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Are there different kinds of mosquitoes?

Yes. About 3000 different kinds (also called "species") of mosquitoes have been identified worldwide, with more than 150 different mosquito species found in North America. Fifty-one different species of mosquitoes have been identified in Massachusetts.

Where are mosquitoes usually found?

Most adults spend the day in damp, shady areas where they can find protection from the sun; some of them will even hide in your house. Mosquitoes need water to lay their eggs in and plants to hide in so they are usually found around water and plants. Mosquito eggs are laid on water or damp soil where the young mosquitoes grow and develop.

Different mosquitoes prefer different kinds of water. Some use natural sources of water such as swamps or ponds and others prefer water in swimming and wading pools, old tires, watering cans, flower pots, trash cans, etc. When the young mosquito turns into an adult, it leaves the water and flies away.

How long do mosquitoes live?

Most female mosquitoes live for less than 2 weeks and most male mosquitoes live for less than a week. However, when the conditions are right, some mosquitoes will live up to 8 weeks. The life cycle of all mosquitoes includes four different stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Adult mosquitoes are the only ones that fly.

Why do mosquitoes bite?

Only female mosquitoes bite to suck blood. The female uses the blood to make eggs. Male and female mosquitoes use plant nectars and fruit juices as their main source of food.

Do all female mosquitoes bite humans?

No. Different species of mosquitoes like different types of blood. Some mosquitoes feed on animals like frogs, turtles and birds. Other species kinds bite mammals, including horses and humans. Some will bite both birds and mammals including humans. These mosquito species play an important role in spreading disease between birds and other mammals, including humans. *Diseases that normally are found in birds can be transmitted to humans (and some other mammals, like horses) by mosquitoes that bite both birds and mammals.*

When am I most likely to be bitten by a mosquito?

You can be bitten at any time. Different species of mosquitoes are active at different times of the day. Most mosquito species are active from just before dusk, through the night until dawn.

Did you know?

Some species of mosquitoes can fly 1.5 miles per hour.

How does a mosquito find an animal or human to bite?

Female mosquitoes are attracted to the gas (carbon dioxide) that humans and other animals breathe out. Mosquitoes can follow a stream of carbon dioxide from as far as 50 feet away. Mosquitoes are also attracted to substances like lactic acid on your skin, which your body produces in greater amounts when exercising.

Mosquitoes may also be attracted to certain scents or fragrances and are more attracted to dark colors than light colors.

Why are mosquito bites a concern?

Some mosquitoes carry germs that can make people and some animals sick. Mosquitoes can transmit viruses when they bite. In Massachusetts, the diseases linked to mosquitoes are West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus.

Do all mosquitoes spread germs to people?

No. In fact, most mosquito bites will only result in itching or skin irritation. However, some species found in Massachusetts carry viruses that can cause illness. Information about common kinds of mosquitoes that are most likely to spread disease in Massachusetts is shown below.

Mosquito Species Name	When are they most active?	Where do they live and what kind of water do they like?	What types of animals do they bite?	What time of year are they most common?
Aedes vexans	Dusk/dawn, night	River floodplains and Salt-marshes – temporary flooded areas	Mammals/humans	Summer and early fall
Coquillettidia perturbans	Dusk/dawn, night	Woodlands – cat-tail marshes	Birds Mammals/humans	Summer
Culex pipiens	Dusk/dawn, night	Urban areas – artificial containers	Birds, Occasionally mammals/humans	Summer and early fall
Culex restuans	Dusk/dawn, night	Urban areas – natural and artificial containers	Birds, Occasionally mammals/humans	Spring, summer and fall
Culex salinarius	Dusk/dawn, night	Salt-marshes – brackish and freshwater wetlands	Reptiles Birds Mammals/humans	Summer
Culiseta melanura	Dusk/dawn, night	Woodlands – white cedar and red maple swamps	Birds, Occasionally mammals/humans	Spring and summer
Ochlerotatus canadensis	Dusk/dawn, day	Woodlands – woodland pools	Birds Mammals/humans	Late spring through summer
Ochlerotatus japonicus	Day	Urban areas – natural and artificial containers	Mammals/humans	Summer through fall

Where can I get more information?

- **For information on diseases spread by mosquitoes and how to prevent them:** contact the MDPH, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800 or visit the MDPH Arbovirus website at www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/wnv/wnv1.htm.

- **For information on mosquito repellents:** review the MDPH Public Health Fact Sheet on Mosquito Repellents online at www.mass.gov/dph/epi . If you can't go online, contact the MDPH at (617) 983-6800 for a hard copy.

- **For information on mosquito control in your city or town**: The State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB) within the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources oversees mosquito control in Massachusetts (http://www.mass.gov/agr/mosquito/). The SRMCB can be contacted at 617-626-1777. There are nine established mosquito control districts in the state that provide service to many cities and towns. Information for each district can be found at www.mass.gov/agr/mosquito/districts.htm. Also, you can contact your local board of health concerning mosquito problems.

This fact sheet was developed in conjunction with the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board and the Massachusetts Mosquito Control Projects.

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