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## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN ST. LUCIE URGES RESIDENTS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM MOSQUITO- AND TICK-BORNE ILLNESSES



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**St. Lucie County** — The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County (DOH-St. Lucie) is urging all residents and visitors, especially those that are spending time outdoors, to protect themselves from mosquito and tick bites this summer season. While most tick and mosquito bites are only an annoyance, sometimes these bites can be dangerous. Preventing bites reduces the risk of a person getting infected with a [mosquito-](#) or [tick-borne disease](#).

“As summer heat, rain and humidity begin and hurricane season starts, mosquito and tick populations can become more prevalent. It is particularly important to take protective measures. Time outdoors increases your exposure to these disease spreading pests. According to the CDC, mosquitoes is the world’s deadliest animal, and kills more people than any other creature in the world. Again, it is imperative that you take preventive measures and prepare now for you and your family when outdoors.” said Clint Sperber, Health Officer and Administrator of the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County.

### **Mosquito Bite Prevention**

Using the right insect repellent and other preventive actions can discourage mosquitoes from landing on you. Follow these **Drain and Cover** tips to help prevent mosquito bites.

**Drain** water from outside areas to reduce the number of places mosquitoes can lay their eggs and breed.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flowerpots, or any other containers where sprinkler or rainwater has collected.
- Discard old tires, bottles, pots, broken appliances, and other items not being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets’ water bowls at least twice a week.
- Flush water-holding plants, such as bromeliads regularly with water.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that do not accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

Download these infographics for more information: [Mosquitoes- Keep Them Outside and Stop Them From Breeding](#) and [Protect Your Home From Mosquitoes](#).

**Cover** with protective clothing while outdoors and keep doors and windows closed to prevent mosquitoes from going indoors.

- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and long sleeves while outside when and where mosquitoes are most prevalent to discourage mosquitoes from biting.
- Apply insect repellent that contains DEET (10-30%), picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone or IR3535.
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5%. Do not apply permethrin directly to skin. Some sports clothing and gear come pretreated with permethrin.
- Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.
- Check and repair screens on doors and windows. Keep them closed and use air conditioning when possible.
- Make sure window screens are in good repair to reduce the chance of mosquitoes indoors.

Download the [Mosquito Bite Protection in Florida](#) infographic.

### **Tick Bite Prevention**

Ticks are commonly found on the tips of grasses and shrubs and climb aboard humans as they walk by. Follow these steps to help prevent tick bites.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Ticks will be more visible if clothing is light-colored.
- Apply insect repellent that contains DEET (10-30%), picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone or IR3535.
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5%. Do not apply permethrin directly to skin. Some sports clothing and gear come pretreated with permethrin.
- Walk in the center of trails so grass, shrubs, and weeds do not brush against you.
- Check for and [remove ticks from your clothing, body, hair](#), and pets when you have been outside.
- Washing clothing in hot water or tumbling dry clothing in the dryer for at least 10 minutes set at high heat will kill ticks.
- Shower soon after being in tick habitat.
- If a tick is found on the skin, it is important to [safely remove the tick as soon as possible](#).
- Talk to your veterinarian about tick prevention products [for your pets](#).
- Keep grass, shrubs and trees close to your residence trimmed.

Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) for more information on preventing tick bites.

### **Tips on Using Repellent**

- For both mosquitoes and ticks, use insect repellent approved by the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) on exposed skin and clothing. EPA's helpful [search tool](#) can help you find the product that best suits your needs.
- Follow instructions on the product label, especially if you're applying it to children.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.

- Always follow instructions when applying insect repellent to children and do not use repellents with DEET on babies younger than 2 months or oil of lemon eucalyptus on children under 3 years old.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.

Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) for more information on the safe use of repellent.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The Department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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