Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)

8/29/2019

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a mosquito borne viral disease that can present as a generalized infection or as a brain infection.

Following a bite by an infected mosquito, there is an incubation period of 4 to 10 days. Symptoms of a generalized infection have a sudden onset characterized by chills, fever, lack of energy, joint and muscle pains. These symptoms usually last 1 – 2 weeks and the person recovers completely. Symptoms of a brain infection (encephalitis) include fever, headache, restlessness, drowsiness, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, and may progress to convulsions and coma. Encephalitis may be fatal.

There is no curative treatment for EEE. Care is focused on supportive treatment which may involve hospitalization especially for those with encephalitis.

Mosquito testing is routinely carried out by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health from May to October. As of today, Lowell remains at a low risk level. However, several adjoining communities, Dracut and Tewksbury, have been designated as moderate risk.

Prevention of EEE involves reducing your chances of getting bitten by a mosquito.

- **Be aware of mosquito peak hours** - Plan outdoor activities to avoid the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- **Clothing can help reduce mosquito bites** - When you are outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Apply insect repellent when outdoors** - Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus on exposed skin and/or clothing. The repellent/insecticide permethrin can be used on clothing to protect through several washes. Always follow the directions on the package.

For more information and updates, please refer to the following resources.

https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eee-eastern-equine-encephalitis

https://www.cdc.gov/easternequineencephalitis/index.html