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Williamson County and Cities Health District Urges Precaution Against Mosquito Bites

The Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) advises the public to take precautions during the spring and avoid mosquito bites that may lead to illness. A simple way to reduce the threat is to clean up areas where mosquitoes can breed around the house. Empty or drain buckets, flower pots, old tires, or anything that holds water. Gutters should be cleaned regularly and bird baths cleaned at least weekly. Cisterns or rain barrels should be tightly sealed and screened. WCCHD Medical Entomologist Catherine Zettel Nalen says, “You may think your home is safe from mosquitoes, but they only need a small amount of water to reproduce. Eliminating standing water around your house and keeping your yard clear of debris is one of the most effective ways to protect your family from mosquitoes.”

The threat of arboviruses fluctuates from year to year in Texas and depends on a variety of factors including the weather, the numbers of birds and mosquitoes that maintain and spread viruses, and human behavior. Nalen says, “We cannot predict what the mosquito threat will be this year, because of the variety of factors that need to come together to spread mosquito related illnesses. As always, we are prepared and have plans in place in case this year turns out to be an active year.” WCCHD will continue testing areas of Williamson County for mosquito-borne illnesses, such as West Nile virus and Chikungunya. The Integrated Mosquito Management Program utilizes a comprehensive management strategy to identify and monitor mosquitoes that carry arboviruses, alert and educate citizens about personal protection, and test mosquitoes throughout the county weekly for the presence of viral illnesses. In 2014, there was one reported case of Chikungunya in Williamson County involving a resident who contracted the virus during a trip overseas. There was also one case of West Nile neuroinvasive disease in Williamson County, contracted locally.

WCCHD’s Fight the Bite campaign encourages public awareness of the four D’s throughout the year:

- **Dawn and Dusk** are the times to avoid outdoor activity since those are times disease-carrying mosquitoes are most active.
- **Dress** in long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
- **Drain** standing water in flower pots, pet dishes, or clogged gutters so mosquitoes don’t have a place to breed.
- **Defend** using an EPA-approved insect repellant.

For more information and updates on the mosquito management efforts in Williamson County, visit [www.wcchd.org](http://www.wcchd.org).