



Catawba County Public Health

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IT’S SUMMER AND THE BUGS ARE BITINGHICKORY, N.C. – Summer brings with it images of people spending time with friends and family outdoors, camping, hiking, gardening and having fun by the pool.

Unfortunately, mosquitoes can bring a lot of itching (and a few diseases) to those activities, if you’re not careful.

Considered to be a pest insect, mosquitoes can be irritating and their itchy bites are a nuisance to people trying to enjoy outdoor activities. In some cases, they can be more than a pest and actually transmit diseases such as West Nile virus and Zika virus.

The key to controlling the mosquito population lies in the interruption of their life cycle: They need water to lay eggs. If we eliminate watery places where they can lay their eggs, we prevent the next generation of critters from hatching. The most common mosquito in our area, the Asian Tiger Mosquito doesn’t fly far from where it’s born. If you seem to be swatting a lot, it’s likely that mosquitoes are breeding somewhere close to you. If that’s the case, check your own yard, and let your neighbors know to check theirs for potential mosquito breeding sites. If everyone in an area eliminates mosquito breeding areas, you should see a reduction in mosquitoes within a few weeks.

One of the best ways to eliminate breeding areas is through the Tip and Toss method. Around our homes and neighborhoods, we have a lot of places that hold water and harbor mosquito larvae such as bird baths, discarded tires, and plant pots. To Tip and Toss, we should get rid of things that can hold stagnant water. If you use buckets or barrels, cover them with a screen to keep mosquitoes from entering and laying their eggs. Emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels, changing the water in pet dishes and replacing the water in bird baths weekly also helps. Drilling holes in tire swings so water drains out and keeping wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren’t being used can eliminate breeding places for mosquitoes. We should also make sure gutters are cleaned out so water drains from them properly.

To avoid bites during your favorite summertime activities, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends:

- Use repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, some oil of lemon eucalyptus or paramenthane-diol. Follow the directions on the package and reapply as needed.
- Because many species of mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn, consider wearing long sleeves and pants if you are going to be outside in those times.
- If you open your windows at home, make sure the screens are free of rips, tears and holes.

Catawba County Public Health, located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., works to protect and promote the health of all county residents. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth.

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“Leading the Way to a Healthier Community”

