

Mosquito management at home

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OFFICIAL

Why are mosquitoes a problem?

While most mosquitoes are just annoying, some of them can also carry diseases. Mosquito-borne diseases are transmitted by mosquito bites. They cannot be transmitted from person-to-person.

The best way to prevent mosquito-borne diseases is by avoiding mosquito bites.

Bite prevention

Simple actions to prevent mosquito bites are the most important things you can do to reduce your risk of mosquito-borne diseases.

Always remember to protect yourself from getting bitten by:

- limit time outside especially at dusk and in the evening when lots of mosquitoes are about.
- wearing mosquito repellent containing picaridin or DEET on all exposed skin. For kids and babies, apply repellent to their clothes, rather than their skin
- covering up and wearing long, light coloured, loose-fitting clothing
- using 'knockdown' fly spray, mosquito coils or plug-in repellent where you gather to sit or eat outdoors
- removing any flying mosquitoes from inside your house e.g. with fly spray

Mosquito-proof your home:

- Remove stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed.
- Make sure your home is mosquito-proof by installing insect screens.
- On holidays, make sure your accommodation is fitted with mosquito netting or screens.

How does flooding impact mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes do not breed in initial flood waters. However, as flood waters drop, the water left behind for extended periods which doesn't move, is a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes.

What is being done to manage mosquitoes?

Local councils are undertaking routine prevention activities in areas known to be favourable for mosquito breeding. When a particular species of mosquito that spreads disease are found in very high numbers, or a virus is detected in mosquitoes, additional mosquito control measures are implemented by government agencies to protect the impacted communities.

In Victoria, the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 outline responsibilities for mosquito management.

The Department of Health manages a state-wide program to reduce the impact of disease transmitted by mosquitoes. This program funds:

- Councils in key areas to undertake weekly mosquito surveillance. Mosquitoes are trapped and then sent to a specialised lab for testing. The results determine the level of risk for that community and guide the recommendations for interventions.
- Specialised teams which can be deployed to areas where diseases like Ross River virus or Japanese Encephalitis virus are circulating and use specific control activities to help reduce the risk to the nearby communities.

What activities are used to control mosquitoes?

Although mosquito management on private property is the responsibility of the landowner or land occupier, councils play a key role in the management of mosquito-borne diseases that pose a risk to public health.

There are three main ways in which mosquitoes can be controlled. Local councils will decide which method is used, depending on the weather, environmental conditions, and the level of risk for the community.

1. The most common way is to stop the mosquitoes before they hatch. By introducing a low toxicity agent into the water where mosquitoes breed, it can prevent about 85 per cent of mosquitoes hatching, decreasing the numbers significantly, but not completely. This is known as larviciding.
2. To target adult mosquitoes, large amounts of fly spray can be used. This can be done by spraying a fine mist of insecticide from a unit mounted on a truck, trailer, or utility vehicle, or using a hand-held device to release the fly spray in the form of a white fog (this is not smoke). This is known as fogging and should only be done by professionals. Fogging can reduce the number of mosquitoes for a few days.
3. Using a spray or mist designed to stick to surfaces (such as long grass, bushes, or fences – places where mosquitoes rest), this can reduce mosquito numbers for weeks or even months, depending on the specific spray used.

What can I do to control mosquitoes on my property?

You may be impacted by mosquitoes breeding on your property or flying in from neighbouring properties. To reduce mosquitoes around your home:

- consider using a residual spray outdoors in areas where mosquitoes rest
- cut back long grass and shrubs where mosquitoes can rest, especially around outdoor areas where you may gather to eat in the evenings
- empty any unsealed pots, bird baths or tyres that can hold water at least once a week
- remove stagnant water on your property as able, such as digging channels to encourage the water to drain
- ensure your water tank is fully sealed.

Do not add products like kerosene, paraffin, or vegetable oil to the stagnant water or water tanks because they are either dangerous or do not work.

While larvicides used by council are available and have very low toxicity, they should only be used by professionals. Commercial pest controllers have the training and experience in the use of these products and may be engaged to assist in mosquito management.

Where to get more information

[Protect yourself from mosquito-borne disease](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/protect-yourself-mosquito-borne-disease) <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/protect-yourself-mosquito-borne-disease>>

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