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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Health Department notes efforts to help reduce mosquito population

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Mosquito season has begun in Joplin due to the recent rains and warm weather. With more mosquitoes comes an increased risk for West Nile Virus. By taking some simple precautions, you can protect yourself from being bitten and being infected with West Nile virus.

West Nile Virus is carried by birds, and can be transmitted when a mosquito bites an infected bird and then bites a person, animal or another bird. Most people who are infected will not even get sick. A few may have mild symptoms like a fever, headache or body aches. A very small number (less than 1%) of people may become very ill and may even die. Most of those serious illnesses occur in people over 50 years old. Even though your chance of becoming sick is very low, it is still important to protect yourself and our community from mosquitoes.

A mosquito can breed in as little as one teaspoonful of water. Look around your yard for places where water may accumulate and become a haven for breeding mosquitoes. A mosquito needs ten days to hatch into an adult.

The Joplin Health Department operates a mosquito control program. This program utilizes occasional fogging to control adult mosquitoes and the treatment of mosquito breeding areas with a larvacide to prevent mosquitoes from becoming adults. Fogging routes are posted on the City of Joplin Health Department website <http://www.joplinhealthdepartment.org/>.

All health department efforts to reduce mosquito populations will only be partially effective unless citizen involvement occurs. The individual resident can do more to control mosquitoes around their home than all other methods combined.

Eliminate mosquito breeding habitats by getting rid of standing water in your yard.

- Dispose of old tires, cans or any other unused item that collects water.
- Make sure your roof gutters are draining properly.
- Change the water in birdbaths, wading pools and pet dishes weekly.
- Ensure your property is adequately graded and drains to prevent standing water.
- Dispose of piles of brush or leaves.
- Store items such as boats, upside down or cover to prevent standing water.
- Treat standing water that cannot be drained with a larvacide, follow all label directions.

Mosquito larvacides are available at local hardware stores.

(more)

Pick up trash in your yard. Clean up leaves and brush piles. Keep your grass mowed short. Trim trees to allow more sunlight into your yard.

You can also take steps to protect yourself against mosquito bites.

- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long sleeved shirts, socks and long pants when you must be outdoors.
- Use an approved insect repellent, and follow the instructions on the product label.
- Talk to your physician or health care provider before applying insect repellants to young children.
- Make sure your window screens fit tightly and are free from holes.

Remember, the best way to keep from getting West Nile Virus is to get rid of mosquito breeding grounds and avoid getting bitten. Contact the Joplin Health Department at 417-623-6122 for more information.

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