

## **KEEP SAFE WHILE CAMPING THIS EASTER**

People planning to go camping over the Easter long weekend should take care to protect themselves from mosquito-borne infections, Acting ACT Chief Health Officer, Dr Paul Kelly said today.

“There has been a general increase in mosquito-borne diseases, including Ross River Fever, in eastern Australia this year due to the La Nina weather pattern,” Dr Kelly said.

“It is not a major issue in the ACT but it would be wise for people to take precautions especially when travelling interstate,” he said.

“The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, especially when travelling or living close to areas near bushland, rivers or wetlands. Mosquitoes are usually most active in the hours after sunset and around dawn,” Dr Kelly said.

“Ross River virus infections can cause symptoms including tiredness, rash, fever, and sore and swollen joints.

“These symptoms usually last a few days, but some people may experience more debilitating symptoms for weeks and occasionally even months,” Dr Kelly said.

There is no specific treatment for these viruses so prevention depends on avoiding mosquito bites, especially when mosquitoes are most active.

Specific ways to prevent infection include:

- When outside wear loose fitting, light coloured clothing that covers your arms and legs, and use an insect repellent. Repellents containing low concentrations of DEET or Picaridin provide shorter periods of protection and need to be reapplied more frequently so it's important to read the product information.
- Topical repellents are not recommended for use on children under 3 months. Use of physical barriers such as netting of prams, cots and play areas is preferred. Repellents containing less than 10% DEET or Picaridin are safe for older children if applied according to instructions. Parents or carers should apply repellent.
- Light mosquito coils or use vapourising mats indoors.

- Use a knockdown insecticide in your tent half an hour before going to bed. Use insecticides according to instructions.
- Take precautions such as using flyscreens on caravans and tents and by sleeping under mosquito proof nets.
- Take particular care while fishing, ensuring that you follow personal precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

If you experience any symptoms please visit your local GP.

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