
KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY Thursday, Sept. 17 • 5:15 p.m.

Information from the Monroe County Tourist Development Council

HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES DENGUE FEVER ADVISORY FOR KEY WEST

The Monroe County Health Department issued a precautionary health advisory for the Key West area Thursday because of several confirmed cases of dengue fever.

A visitor from New York began feeling ill shortly after a weeklong stay in Old Town in August. She has fully recovered.

Within the past two weeks, the department confirmed one other case of dengue and submitted samples from two possible cases to its labs. All three cases are individuals who live in or frequent Old Town Key West. All have fully recovered.

“Dengue is rare in Florida, but not unknown,” said Bob Eadie, Monroe County Health Department administrator. “It’s just one of several mosquito-borne illnesses that we’re always looking out for, and why we continually remind the public to take precautions against mosquito bites.”

Eadie said his staff is working closely with the Florida Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District, which has stepped up spraying and eradication efforts in Key West.

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by a breed of mosquito common to the southeastern United States and the tropics. It is not spread from person to person.

More than 100 million cases of dengue occur every year worldwide with year-round cases in the Caribbean and South and Central America.

Symptoms of dengue include high fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, backache, joint and muscle pains, nausea and vomiting, and sometimes rash. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek medical care.

“Many people may be infected and not develop any symptoms,” Eadie said.

People with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension or congestive heart failure may be at increased risk of severe disease.

“There is no reason to alter one’s lifestyle, but it is appropriate to safeguard against the virus by taking preventive measures against mosquitoes including using repellent and eliminating mosquito breeding sites,” Eadie said.

Eadie recommends using mosquito repellent containing DEET and to follow the manufacturer’s directions.

Eliminate breeding sites by removing water in old tires, buckets, garbage cans and other containers where water collects. Check clogged gutters, fill holes or dips in the ground that collect water and change water in birdbaths, water bowls, plant pots and small wading pools twice a week.

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