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Monday, August 31, 2026

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More Than 40 Locally Acquired Dengue Cases Reported in Florida; FMCA and Mosquito Control Professionals to Help Prevent Spread

Tallahassee, Fla. — With more than 40 confirmed human cases of locally-acquired dengue fever in the state – including more than 30 in the Tampa Bay area - the Florida Mosquito Control Association (FMCA) is urging Floridians to take precautions and help mosquito control professionals across the state reduce the risk of mosquito borne illnesses.

The confirmed cases, which prompted the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County to issue a [mosquito-borne illness alert](#), underscore the importance of Florida's year-round mosquito surveillance, prevention and control efforts.

The locally acquired cases reported in Florida this year include 30 in Hillsborough County, seven in Miami-Dade County, three in Pinellas County and one in Palm Beach County. Hillsborough, Miami-Dade and Pinellas counties are currently under mosquito-borne illness alerts, while Palm Beach County is under a mosquito-borne illness advisory. In Hillsborough County, 10 mosquito pools have also tested positive for dengue virus.

"Dengue is not simply an uncomfortable illness – it can be debilitating and, in severe cases, life-threatening," said Peter Jiang, PhD, director of Hillsborough County Mosquito Management and the president of the Florida Mosquito Control Association, (FMCA). "It is sometimes called 'break-bone fever' because of the intense muscle, joint and bone pain it can cause. For Floridians, it is an important reminder that mosquito control is not just about preventing a nuisance; it is an essential public health service that helps protect our residents and communities from mosquito-borne disease."

[The number of human cases is expected to increase in the state's weekly report.](#) Florida's summertime climate is perfect for mosquitoes, and an influx of visitors – especially in popular destinations like Tampa - enjoying a summer vacation raises the opportunities for diseases to spread.

Florida is home to some of the nation's top mosquito control scientists and professionals. Coordinating with the Florida Department of Health surveillance efforts are focused on limiting the spread.

“And while success is never final, every resident and visitor to our state should know that Florida remains safe and accessible,” he said. “Scientists and highly trained mosquito control professionals work closely with health officials 24/7 to limit the spread of any diseases.”

The state Department of Health says that dengue can “present as a flu-like illness with severe muscle aches and joint pain, fever, and sometimes a rash.”

Symptoms appear within 15 days of being bitten by an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The disease is not contagious among humans.

For more than 100 years, the FMCA has helped scientists and entomologists battle mosquitoes and educate the public about the multitude of dangerous diseases transmitted via a mosquito bite. Currently, Hillsborough County Mosquito Management continues to work closely with the Florida Department of Health and various county and city departments to provide boots on the ground mosquito safety education in areas of concern.

Florida’s mosquito control efforts focus on scientific discovery and inquiry, front-line deployment of personnel and technology, and a strong network of professionals sharing best practices and experiences.

In addition to treating areas where mosquitoes are heavily concentrated, counties use sentinel animals to test for some mosquito-spread diseases. Aircraft and drones can be deployed to treat inaccessible areas.

Every Floridian can help, especially during hot weather which speeds up the lifecycle of a mosquito. The American Mosquito Control Association has [a summary of measures](#) , calling them the three Ds of protection.

- Drain –Following a rain or storm, each household and property becomes a virtual resort for mosquitoes looking for a place to breed. Emptying any water in toys or planters or anywhere is a critical and easy step to slow or eliminate the opportunity for mosquitoes to lay eggs. Mosquitoes only need a teaspoon of water to breed, emptying even small accumulations of water outside can make a difference.
- Dress – Wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothes are a deterrent to mosquitoes, long sleeves or pants provide even more protection.
- Defend – [Use insect repellants that are registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), especially those with DEET. They pose little to no risk for humans but are powerful shields against mosquitoes.

There are 67 mosquito control programs in the state, including 15 independent districts that partner with each other and local departments of health to share important news, resources and scientific studies. They also stand ready to respond to any Floridian’s request for local mosquito treatment.

For more information about the FMCA please [click here](#). And for teachers and parents, [the FMCA has resources to inform children](#) about the science and background of mosquitoes and efforts to control them here.

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