



County of San Luis Obispo
Health Agency

Living with
Mosquitoes
In San Luis Obispo County



The Problem – Mosquitoes and mosquito bites have long been recognized as a nuisance. The bites themselves cause itching and irritation, but can also sometimes cause disease. Mosquitoes breed in standing water, so wherever a pond or puddle is, mosquitoes can breed, making them impossible to completely eliminate from our environment.

MOSQUITO CONTROL

Because mosquitoes have more than one stage in their development, there is more than one strategy to control them.

- **Habitat modification** includes draining standing water, agitating the water's surface to disrupt larval breathing, and removing pond vegetation where larvae shelter from water turbulence and predators.
- **Predators** such as mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) eat mosquito larvae
- **Larvicides** are water-based controls, designed to eliminate the larvae (the aquatic life stage of the mosquito).
- **Adulticides** kill the adult flying insect. These insecticides are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, and information on their use can be found on their website.

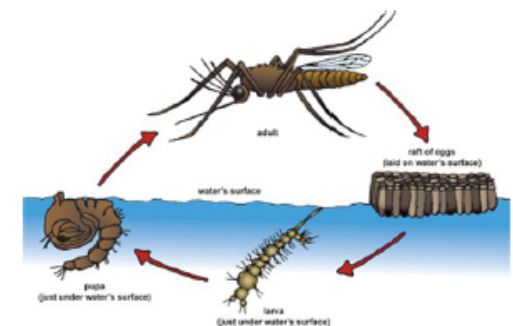
THE FACTS ABOUT MOSQUITOES

Mosquitoes can transmit a variety of diseases and parasites to people and animals in San Luis Obispo County, including West Nile virus, Western equine encephalomyelitis virus, dog heartworm, St. Louis encephalitis virus and malaria.

Adult female mosquitoes acquire disease by feeding on infected animals such as birds or rodents. Bites from infected mosquitoes transmit diseases to people and animals.

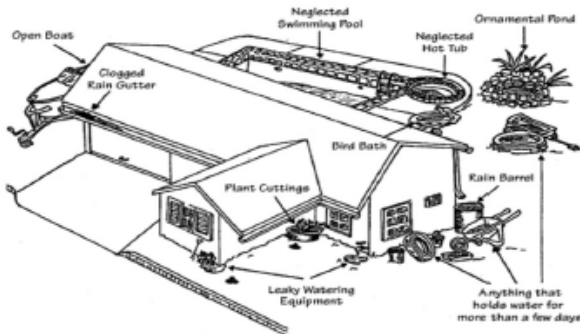
Mosquitoes need water to develop.

The illustration below shows the mosquito life cycle from egg to larva to pupa to adult. The first three stages of the mosquito life cycle are spent in the water. You can prevent mosquitoes from developing by removing or draining standing water that support this life cycle. In warm temperatures, mosquitoes can develop in as little as three days!



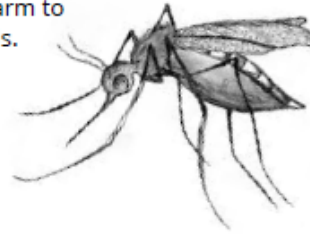
WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP ELIMINATE MOSQUITO BREEDING SOURCES?

- **Drain** all standing water on property including water in buckets, pots, tires, garbage cans and other outdoor containers. Keep swimming pools maintained, or drain them.
- Ensure roof gutters drain properly. Clean gutters in the spring and fall.
- **Empty** and change water in bird baths, pet dishes, fountains, wading pools, rain barrels, and potted plant trays at least once a week if not more often.
- **Remove** vegetation and debris from edges of permanent ponds. Stock ponds, abandoned swimming pools, or other sources that can't be drained with Mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) or treat with a larvicide product (follow manufacturer's instructions).



What is a vector?

A vector is an insect or any other animal capable of transmitting a disease or causing harm to people or animals.



What can I do to avoid being bitten?

- **Apply** a repellent that contains DEET, Picaridin, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Make sure you follow label directions. Do not apply over cuts, wounds, sunburn or irritated skin.
- **Wear** protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- **Check** and repair all screens and screen doors to keep mosquitoes out of your house.
- **Minimize** outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. This is particularly important for the elderly and small children.

While eliminating all mosquitoes is not possible, these guidelines may help you prevent bites.



WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

www.slocounty.ca.gov/health
www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes
www.westnile.ca.gov



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