Anyone who thinks that they are too small to make a difference has never tried to fall asleep with a mosquito in the room. We have now been in Panama for three rainy seasons and this year is the only year I have complained about mosquitos. This is due to the increased amount of standing water in the beach area. Where there is stagnant water there will be mosquitos as it is in standing water that mosquitos lay their eggs. By standing water this could be a marsh, a stagnant pond, a puddle, a plastic bottle or even a vase with flowers. This last rainy season has unfortunately also found an increased number of cases of dengue fever.

It is the elderly female mosquito that are typically responsible for the transmission of diseases. The disease carrying mosquitos will normally bite during the day time hours. The dusk or evening mosquitos while control should be used to keep them from biting, these mosquitos will generally not be carrying or transmitting a disease. There exists vaccines for yellow fever and the risk of contracting malaria down in the pacific area of Panama is very low. Dengue however does not have a vaccine and therefore precautions and control need to be taken to avoid the bite.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever also known as break bone fever, is an infectious disease with the majority of the cases occurring in the tropics. Dengue is transmitted by several species of mosquito within the genus Aedus. Dengue fever is caused by the dengue virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains and often a skin rash that is similar to that of the measles. Most people often experience fatigue that keep some in bed for days. In very few cases the disease develops into the life-threatening dengue hemorrhagic fever. While the cases of Dengue are few in Panama as compared to many other parts of Central and South America, the virus is truly not one anyone wants to experience.

Control

Mosquitos do not need to be a problem if we all exercised a bit of control and preventative measures to keep the little pests at bay. First and foremost, remove any standing water or

causes of standing water from around your home. This means cover the rain catcher containers. Remove debris from your culverts so that water is flowing when it rains. Ensure there is proper drainage in your plants and pots. Do not keep flowers in a vase for longer than 2 days without changing the water. Install screens in your windows that remain open at night. There are plug in wall gizmos that look like a glade plug in that act as a repellant. These 8 hour contraptions will keep the mosquitos from making it to your bed or into your home. These can be found in the bug and mosquito section at El Rey or Super 99. Bug repellant is a necessity in everyone's home and you can find less toxic sprays at Organica and online.

Research has shown that mosquitos are attracted to dark clothing, they like fruity smells and if you eat a lot of bananas you are an instant magnet. They reportedly do not like garlic and can be repelled by burning or wearing natural oils. A citronella candle burning on your terrace will deter the mosquito. Other oils are lemon eucalyptus oil, cinnamon oil, rosemary oil and lemon grass oil.

This article is solely meant to inform and educate the playa community on the importance of mosquito control and bite prevention. Mosquitos are not exclusive to Panama and have reared their ugliness in many other parts of the world including Canada and the U.S. If you have any questions or concerns about mosquitos and mosquito bites you can take a trip to the clinic or to your local Ministerio de Salud (Ministry of Health) in Chame or San Carlos and they will be happy to assist.

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