Warming Climate Changes Vermont Disease

Climate change and global warming are topics often seen in the news. One part of climate change the media has not covered very much are the changes' effects on health. An important area is the effect of climate change on diseases carried by bugs and insects; these are known as 'vector borne diseases' by scientists and healthcare workers.

Here in Vermont, there will be a change in the types of insects living in the state with temperatures getting warmer. As a result, there may be an increase in the diseases the insects carry. It is important to be aware of insects in your local area.

One disease that was not seen in Vermont in the past is Lyme disease. It is carried by a specific kind of tick, which over the past several years has started living in Vermont. There have been cases of Vermonters getting Lyme disease in Vermont after being bitten by deer ticks. Lyme disease can have life-long health effects if it is not treated with antibiotics early.

Mosquitoes can cause human disease through mosquito bites. West Nile Virus and other diseases carried by mosquitoes may come with changes in weather in Vermont. Some can cause swelling or inflammation in the brain (encephalitis). Each disease has a different likelihood and timeline for appearing in Vermont based on where they exist now and the amount of change in Vermont's temperature and rainfall.

Exposure to mouse dropping can also be hazardous to human health. Infected mice carry viruses that can damage the lungs, heart, and kidneys.

Overall, climate change will affect many areas of day-to-day living. It is important to be informed and prepared for changes that could have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of Vermont's residents. Everyone should be aware of these diseases, take measures to limit exposure, and seek medical attention in the event of illness following a tick or insect bite.

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