The New Mosquito Emoji is Much More than a Winky Face

By Julianna LeMieux — March 7, 2018

There are 2,666 emojis available for tweets and texts. They communicate effectively and quickly, a process that public health experts are always looking to improve in their field. A new emoji could provide just the help that they need, at least when it comes to a certain category of infectious disease - those that are transmitted by mosquito.

The mosquito emoji, which will be available in mid-2018, will hopefully provide a new means for communication about mosquitoes, in the realms of both science communication and health implications.

The mosquito is the most dangerous animal on Earth, responsible for spreading diseases like malaria, Zika, dengue, and yellow fever, which contribute to several million deaths and hundreds of millions of illnesses every year.

Global health advocates were supportive of the mosquito emoji because it will allow public health officials to communicate with the public about the presence of mosquitoes in certain areas and therefore alert people of potential outbreaks. In addition, it will allow researchers to promote their work around mosquito-borne diseases more easily on social media. In both instances, it will be used informally to raise awareness about mosquito-borne diseases.

How does an emoji come to be?
Becoming an emoji is a far more complicated process than one may think. In the case of the mosquito emoji, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs were large supporters of it coming into existence.

The Unicode Consortium is the nonprofit governing body that is responsible for determining which emoji are added each year. Potential new emojis need to be proposed in a detailed, written description which is submitted to Unicode. The proposals are then reviewed and the finalists are chosen and fine-tuned. Unicode had approved 157 new characters for release this June.

So, this summer, if you're finding yourself getting more mosquito bites than normal or are reading one of our exciting articles on Zika and want to retweet it, go ahead and put the mosquito emoji with it to give it a little more buzz.

Links