

## WEST NILE VIRUS

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**HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY**

West Nile virus (WNV) has arrived in North America and we should all make sure we know what steps we can take to prepare ourselves and our homes. This information guideline is here to help educate you about the virus and what you can do to protect yourself and your family

**WHAT IS THE WEST NILE VIRUS?**

Some mosquitoes can carry the West Nile virus and their bites may lead to West Nile virus infection.

An infected individual may result in no symptoms, mild illness such as the West - Nile fever, or in serious cases, a neurological illness such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

Everyone is at risk and precautions are needed to protect yourself.

Children over 2 years of age - use insect repellent (see below for more information)

Children under 2 years of age - use mosquito mesh around the baby carriage

Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by following the guideline below

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE WEST NILE VIRUS?**

You will not be able to tell if an infected Mosquito has bitten you by observing the surface of a mosquito bite. Research shows that approximately four out of five people who are bitten by a West Nile Virus infected mosquito do not show any symptoms. While most people who become infected will experience no symptoms or have very mild illness, for some the symptoms will be severe. For a very rare few, the virus causes serious illnesses such as encephalitis or even death

If you feel you have any of the following symptoms after a mosquito bite seek medical attention immediately:

- Fever
- Stiff neck
- Weak muscles
- Confused and/or disorientation
- Flash headaches
- Sensitivity to light

#### **HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?**

- West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite an infected bird.
- The virus cannot spread by person-to-person contact through touching, sneezing, coughing or the sharing of the same drinking cup.
- There is a slight chance of obtaining the virus from handling dead birds. Should you need to handle a dead bird, use gloves.
- West Nile virus does not transfer from mammals such as dogs to humans.

#### **WHO IS AT RISK?**

Anyone who is outside during the summer months is at risk. People who garden, play golf, go for walks and campers should take adequate measures in protecting themselves from mosquito bites. If you are outside, you are at risk.

#### **USE INSECT REPELLANT:**

- Use only products that are federally regulated. Make sure the repellent has DEET (No N-diethyl-m-toluanide) present. The concentration of DEET should be no greater than 10% for children. For more information on DEET, visit [Deet.com](http://Deet.com).
- Always follow the directions on the label of the repellent. Never use repellent under clothing, always apply mildly on skin surface and on top of clothing.
- Wash skin with soap and water when protection is no longer needed.
- Gardeners, please note. Avoid early morning and evenings when mosquitoes are most active.

#### **ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR USING DEET ON CHILDREN UNDER 2:**

- Insect Repellents that contain MET may be considered for children aged 6 months to 2 years. Apply only once a day in a light coating. MET repellents should not be used for children under 6 months of age. Always follow product directions.
- Use lightly avoiding the face and hands, apply only once a day, and use the least concentrated product (10% or less).
- For more information, contact your doctor or pharmacist.

**TIME TO COVER UP:**

- When going out during the hours of dusk and dawn always wear light colors. Mosquito's are attracted to deep, dark colors such as blacks and brown.
- Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants.
- For extra protection you can tuck your pants into your socks.

**CLEAN UP ALL AROUND THE HOUSE:**

The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas where they like to breed. Mosquitoes stay around their breeding habitat. Take a look around your house and property and get rid of places that can attract mosquitoes.

*Any type of standing water*

- Clean up and empty containers of standing water such as old tires, flower pots, barrels or tin cans that are outdoors. Anything that can hold still water.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of any container that is stored outdoors.
- Change water in bird baths every other day.
- Swimming or wading pools
  - Immediately remove water that collects on pool covers.
  - The pools water pump should be circulating at all times.
  - Kids pools should be turned over when not in use.

*Check your windows!*

- Make sure your windows fit securely into their frame so no gaps are present for mosquitoes to enter through.
- Check screens for punctures.
- If you do not have screens on your windows you should keep windows closed during the hours of dusk and dawn

**LAWN AND YARD MAINTENANCE:**

- Lawn cuttings, raked leaves or other decaying debris such as apples that fall from trees should be collected and recycled so the organic matter does not end up in sewers as a food source for mosquito larvae.
- Turn over compost frequently.
- Fill in low depressions in lawn areas.
- Clear out dense shrubbery where mosquitoes like to rest.
- Talk to your neighbors; educate them on possible nesting grounds on their property.
- The best way to rid of mosquitoes is to get rid of their nesting grounds.

**MOSQUITO CONTROL IN YOUR COMMUNITY:**

A decision to use mosquito larviciding or adulticiding requires a local risk assessment. Contact your local government for more information on regulations and control.

Registered pesticides may be used at two different points of a mosquitoes lifecycle: at its larva stage and at its adult stage.

**Larvicides:**

In the larva stage, pesticide products called Larvicides are effective when placed in stagnant water which is where mosquitoes prefer to lay their eggs.

Larvicides can only be sold at licensed vendor outlets and applied by trained and licensed applicators or trained technicians. Larvicides cause minimal impact to the environment and do not present unacceptable risks to human health.

**Adulticides:**

Control of adult mosquitoes involves the application of pesticides in late evening when adult mosquitoes are most active. For disease control programs the use of malathion applied by ground equipment in urban areas. Adulticides must be applied by trained and licensed applicators.

The use of adulticides might be necessary only when there is a risk to human health from West Nile virus and when other disease prevention or mosquito control measures either have failed or would be inadequate to stop the spread of the virus.