



JUST THE FACTS

WEST NILE VIRUS

What are the symptoms?

Many people infected with West Nile virus do not get sick or experience any symptoms. When the virus does cause illness, symptoms will usually appear two to 15 days from the time of being bitten.

Mild symptoms include:

fever	headaches	body aches
swollen lymph glands	mild rash	

Severe symptoms include the rapid onset of:

severe headache	high fever	muscle weakness
stiff neck	vomiting	confusion
sensitivity to light	paralysis	

Anyone who experiences the sudden onset of these severe symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

While there is no treatment or vaccine for WNV, symptoms can be treated.

Who is at risk?

Anyone exposed to mosquitoes in an area where West Nile virus has been detected is at some degree of risk for infection.

People who may be at greater risk for serious health implications from West Nile virus include:

- Those with weaker or compromised immune systems, including older adults.
- People who have a chronic disease.
- Those who are undergoing medical treatments such as chemotherapy.

However, because West Nile virus can cause severe complications in anyone, it is extremely important to reduce the risk of getting bitten by mosquitoes.

How can I minimize my risk?

Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites.

If you lessen your chance of being bitten by a mosquito, you reduce your chance of getting West Nile virus.

- Use insect repellents that contain DEET or other approved ingredients when going outdoors. Read and follow the manufacturers' directions for safe use.
- Make sure that door and window screens fit securely and are free of holes.
- Limit the time you spend outdoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat when outdoors. Light-coloured clothing is best as mosquitoes tend to be attracted to dark colours.



Canada had its first confirmed case of mosquito transmitted West Nile virus in 2002. While the risk of West Nile virus infection is low and the risk of serious health effects from the virus is even lower, it is important for everyone to take steps to reduce their risk of getting bitten by mosquitoes.

WHAT IS... West Nile Virus?

The West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito transmitted virus that can be transferred to humans from the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected when it bites a bird with WNV.

There is no evidence to suggest that you can get WNV by touching or kissing an infected person. There is also no evidence that the virus can pass from infected animals, such as horses or pets, to people. However, it is still important to follow standard health and safety practices when handling dead birds or animals, such as wearing protective gloves.

How can I minimize my risk? continued

Eliminate mosquito breeding sites around your home and other properties.

Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water. Undisturbed or stagnant water become habitat for larvae. Even a small amount of water, such as in a saucer under a flower pot, is enough to act as a breeding ground. As a result, it is important to eliminate as much standing water as possible.

- Keep pool covers properly stored and free of water.
- Remove unused items from around your property (e.g., old tires) because they have a tendency to collect water.
- Change the water in wading pools, bird baths, pet bowls, and livestock watering tanks at least twice a week.
- Cover rain barrels with tightly fitting screens or lids.
- Cover or drilling holes in recycling bins and other containers kept outside. This avoids water collecting in the bottom.
- Clean out eavestroughs regularly to prevent clogs that can trap water.
- Run an aerator in ornamental ponds or stock them with fish or frogs. This will keep the surface water moving and therefore inhospitable to mosquito larvae.
- Keep wheelbarrows and plastic wading pools turned over when they are not being used.

Is insect repellent with DEET safe?

Yes. Health Canada did a complete safety review of products with DEET. Since 2004, products with more than 30% DEET aren't available because these products don't give any extra protection. For more information on DEET and other insect repellants visit Health Canada's website, www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/consum/insectrepellents-e.html General directions for applying insect repellent use.

- Use federally registered insect repellents such as products containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide).
- Don't use on sunburned, irritated, or broken skin.
- Apply repellent sparingly on exposed skin or on top of clothing.
- Don't use under clothing.
- Follow label directions carefully.

If you suspect that you or someone you know is having an adverse reaction to an insect repellent, discontinue use of the product, wash treated skin, and call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-268-9017 or seek medical attention.

For more information.

Other "Just the Facts" information sheets on West Nile virus:

- Pregnancy and Breastfeeding
- Protecting Campers
- Protecting Young Children
- Protecting Outdoor Workers
- Protecting the Elderly
- For Veterinarians
- Blood Products, Organ and Tissue Donation

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

www.wehealthunit.org/diseases-conditions • 519-258-2146

References:

Health Canada. (2006). *West Nile virus – protect yourself!* Retrieved May 22, 2007, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/wn-no/index_e.html



WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY
HEALTH UNIT

WEST NILE VIRUS

What is the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit doing?

In 2010 the Health Unit, along with each municipality, will continue to conduct human surveillance to monitor for West Nile virus. The larviciding program will continue throughout the 2010 summer season, along with investigating standing water complaints and distributing educational materials, such as this "Just the Facts" sheet.

For more information about larvicides, visit the Ministry of Environment at www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/land/westnile.

What if I find a dead bird?

If you find a dead bird report it to Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre by calling 1-866-673-4781.

If you need to dispose of a dead bird:

- Use rubber gloves and a shovel to handle the carcass.
- Bury the carcass at least 1 m (3 ft) deep (it is not recommended that you use a vegetable garden), or double bag the bird in sealed plastic bags and place in the garbage for pickup.
- Throw away the rubber gloves and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.