



JUST THE FACTS



WEST NILE VIRUS

PROTECTING YOUNG CHILDREN

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.

Are children more at risk?

No. There is no evidence to suggest that children are at a higher risk of contracting the West Nile virus. In fact, complications from West Nile virus are more common in adults than in children. However, it is important to seek medical attention if a child experiences symptoms.

What can I do to protect my children?

By taking simple precautions you can reduce your child's chance of being bitten by a mosquito, which also reduces the chance of getting West Nile virus.

- Use insect repellents that contain DEET (maximum 10% DEET concentration) 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 they spend outdoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Dress children in long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat when outdoors. Light-coloured clothing is best as mosquitoes tend to be attracted to dark colours.
- Cover strollers and outdoor playpens with mosquito netting.

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.

Is insect repellent containing DEET safe?

Yes. Health Canada recommends using insect repellents containing no more than 10% DEET for children between the ages of 2-12 years. 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.

Do...

- Use federally registered insect repellents such as products containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide).
- Apply repellent sparingly on exposed skin or on top of clothing.
- Follow label directions carefully.
- Apply to your own hands, and then apply to the child.

Do not...

- Do not use on sunburned, irritated, or broken skin.
- Do not use under clothing.
- Do not allow children to apply the repellent themselves.
- Repellent should not be applied to the hands or face, this makes it less likely for the child to get it into their eyes or mouth.

Children under 6 months of age:

- DO NOT use insect repellents containing DEET on infants. Instead, use mosquito netting for babies and toddlers in cribs and strollers.

Children aged 6 months to 2 years:

- If there is a high risk of complications from insect bites, one application (per day) of a product with the lowest concentration of DEET (maximum 10% DEET concentration) may be considered for this age group.
- Prolonged use should be avoided.

Children between 2-12 years of age:

- The product should be applied sparingly and not be applied to the face and hands.
- The product with the lowest concentration of DEET (maximum 10% DEET concentration) should be used.
- Do not apply more than three times per day.
- Prolonged use should be avoided.

If you suspect that you or your child 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:

- West Nile Virus
- Pregnancy and Breastfeeding
- Protecting the Elderly
- Blood Products, Organ and Tissue Donation
- Protecting Campers
- Protecting Outdoor Workers
- For Veterinarians

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



How can I reduce the number of mosquitoes around my home?

Eliminate mosquito breeding sites around your home and other properties.

Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water, so any undisturbed or stagnant water becomes 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.