

Information for the Public

West Nile Virus/Mosquito Control

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a cause of “encephalitis”, which means an inflammation of the brain. It is spread by mosquito bites and can infect people, horses, and birds.

What are the symptoms of West Nile virus?

Most people never have any symptoms at all. A few people may have a fever, headache, and body aches. These individuals recover without any treatment. About 10% of individuals may have a more severe illness with fever, fatigue, confusion, headache, weakness, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, stiff neck and stomach pain.

Who is most at risk for West Nile virus?

People over age 50 and individuals who go out-of-doors in the summer without taking any precautions against mosquitoes. People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito.

How is West Nile virus spread?

The infected mosquito is the only vector that can transmit West Nile Virus. West Nile Virus is **not contagious!!** It cannot be spread directly from one person to another.

How can I protect my family from West Nile virus?

Removal of Old Tires – Water sits in old tires creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Old tires should be disposed of properly.

Bird Bath/Children’s Pool – Should not be left standing for long periods of time. Recommend emptying and refilling water once a week if not more often. Swimming pools with adequately functioning chlorination systems are not effected and do not need to be changed.

Drain Spouts/Flower Pots – Drains should be cleaned and free of standing water. Flowers should be watered; however, excess drainage should be emptied and not left in the overflow basin.

Fish Ponds – If your pond has an aeration unit and the water circulation is good, mosquitoes will not harbor. If you have standing, stagnate water you should contact a pest management service center that can provide chemicals to treat the pond and eliminate mosquito infestation.

Mosquito Repellents – Use mosquito repellents containing DEET. Use only as directed. Apply sparingly to children before playing outdoors. Rinse off with soap and water. This should not be put on a child’s face.

Personal Attire – Use head net, long sleeves, and long pants if you venture into areas of high mosquito populations.

Mosquito Control Myths

FALSE: Ultraviolet lights used in bug zappers and ultrasonic devices are effective

FALSE: Bats and Purple Martin birds eat enough mosquitoes to be useful.

FALSE: Citronella candles, citronella repellents, and garlic keep mosquitoes away.

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This information is provided by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health.