

## **West Nile Virus**

### **Steps You Can Take to Prevent West Nile Virus Encephalitis**

#### **How can I protect myself and my family from mosquito bites?**

There is no vaccine for West Nile virus (WNV). The best way to protect yourself is to keep mosquitoes from biting you. Follow these steps every summer if you live in or visit an area with mosquitoes:

- Avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, if possible, since this is the time when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET (the chemical N-N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) and follow the directions on the label. DEET can be toxic if overused. Never use DEET on infants and do not apply repellents to the face or hands of children. Avoid using repellents with DEET concentrations above 10-15% for children and with concentrations above 30-35% for adults. Cream, lotion or stick formulas are best for use on the skin. However, avoid products with high amounts of alcohol, as these may be absorbed through the skin.
- Most mosquito repellents will remain effective for many hours, so it is not necessary to reapply the repellent. Once inside, wash off insect repellents thoroughly with soap and water.
- Take special care to cover up the arms and legs of children playing outdoors. When you take a baby outdoors, cover the baby's carriage or playpen with mosquito netting.
- Fix any holes in your screens and make sure they are tightly attached to all your doors and windows.

#### **How can I reduce the number of mosquitoes around my home and neighborhood?**

To reduce mosquito populations around your home and neighborhood, get rid of any standing water that is available for mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes will breed in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than four days. Here are some simple steps you can take:

- Dispose of or regularly empty any metal cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, and other water-holding containers (including trash cans) on your property.
- Pay special attention to discarded tires that may have collected on your property. Tires are a common place for mosquitoes to breed.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers that are left outdoors, to let water drain out.
- Clean clogged roof gutters; remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of rainwater.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Do not allow water to stagnate in birdbaths; aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with fish.
- Keep swimming pools clean and properly chlorinated; remove standing water from pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.

Using pesticides to kill adult mosquitoes is expensive and is not effective in eliminating mosquitoes. That is because the pesticide must contact the mosquitoes in order to be killed. It is most cost effective to protect yourself and to reduce potential breeding areas. There is also the potential that more harm can occur to sensitive individuals and the environment rather than the mosquito.

The risk of contracting West Nile Virus is very low. Below are comparisons of your risk.

<u>Cause of death</u>	<u>Number per year</u>
Smoking tobacco	400,000
Automobile accidents	45,000
Flu	20,000 to 30,000
Driving while using cell phone (estimated)	2,900
West Nile Virus (total for 2002)	274 (Feb 28, 2003 data)

80 to 90 percent of those that acquire the illness from a mosquito will show no illness or will have only minor symptoms. 10 to 20 percent of those that acquire the illness will have flu like symptoms: moderate to high fever, headache, sore throat, muscle aches, joint ache and fatigue, rash and swollen lymph glands. Only 1 in 150 infected individuals will develop meningitis or encephalitis (swelling of the brain or spinal cord) and possible short term partial paralysis. 1 to 10 percent of those with meningitis or encephalitis will die. That is 0.01 to 0.1 percent of all infected, that is 10 to 100 persons out of 100,000 persons that are infected.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION or TO REPORT DEAD CROWS OR JAYS**

Polk County Environmental Health at 503-623-9237

**TO REPORT HUMAN CASES**

Polk County Public Health at 503-623-8175