



# West Nile virus

## Spoil a mosquito's dinner plans

### Fight the Bite ...

#### What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that is primarily spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes transmit the virus after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of birds which carry the virus.

West Nile virus can cause severe illness, although the risk of becoming seriously ill is low. Most people who become infected experience no symptoms or very mild illness.

#### What are the symptoms of West Nile virus?

Symptoms of West Nile virus include fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, severe headache and a sudden sensitivity to light. For a very rare few, the virus can cause serious neurological illness.

#### Who is at risk for West Nile virus?

Everyone who is outside during the summer months is at risk for West Nile virus and should take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. People who have chronic illnesses and the elderly should be especially careful.

### What York Region Is Doing ...

The York Region West Nile virus Control Plan for 2011 includes mosquito control activities (larviciding), public education, and mosquito and human surveillance programs.

#### What is larviciding?

Larviciding is a low risk and effective measure for the control of West Nile virus. The slow-release pellet formulation interferes with the mosquito life cycle, preventing the mosquito larva from reaching maturity. It is not sprayed. Larvicide will be applied into the standing water of catch basins in four phases, from June through September.

#### Will York Region apply larvicide on private property?

If you are concerned about catch basins on your property, place a mesh screen over the catch basin to prevent mosquitoes from entering and exiting. A limited number of back yard catch basins located on private property will be treated with larvicide on a case-by-case basis.

### What You Can Do ...

Prevention and protection are the best ways to protect yourself and your family from West Nile virus. There are simple and common sense precautions that should be taken:

#### Clean up

The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas of standing water where they like to breed. Look around your house and property and get rid of places that are "mosquito friendly."

- Clean up and empty containers where water collects (old tires, tin cans, flower pots, etc.)
- Change water in bird baths weekly
- Remove water that collects on pool covers
- Turn over items such as wading pools, wheelbarrows and small boats
- Clear leaves and twigs from eavestroughs, storm and roof gutters
- Unclog drainage ditches so that water flows freely
- Make sure swimming pool pump is circulating water
- Clear out dense shrubbery where mosquitoes like to rest
- Turn over compost frequently
- Check that door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair
- Drill holes in the bottoms of containers so water can't collect

#### Cover up

Mosquitoes are most active between dusk and dawn. Protect yourself and your family.

- Wear light coloured long sleeved shirts and pants
- Consider using federally registered insect repellents on exposed skin, such as those containing DEET
- Always follow product instructions
- The concentration of DEET should be no greater than 30% for adults and no greater than 10% for children
- DEET-based repellents can also be used on top of clothing. Do not use repellents under clothing.
- Several DEET-free botanical repellents are federally registered but provide a shorter time of effectiveness. If you are going outdoors for less than 30 minutes, these are safe, effective alternatives.

For more information about West Nile virus, to report standing water or to register your private back yard catch basin for treatment, contact York Region **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653**, **TTY: 1-866-252-9933** or visit **[www.york.ca/westnile](http://www.york.ca/westnile)**



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