

WEST NILE VIRUS

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO
PROTECT YOURSELF

What Is West Nile Virus?

- ▣ West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito
- ▣ Most people (80%) who are infected with WNV will not get sick
- ▣ Some people (20%) who are infected with WNV will have a mild illness with symptoms like fever, headache, muscle aches, and possibly rash

What Is West Nile Virus?

- ▣ Very few people (1 out of 150) infected with WNV will develop severe illnesses affecting the brain and nervous system.
- ▣ These illnesses, usually meningitis or encephalitis, have symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, and tremors.

Who Is At Risk?

- ▣ WNV is found throughout Georgia.
- ▣ Anyone who lives in an area where WNV is active has a low risk of becoming infected.
- ▣ People over the age of 50 are most at risk of developing severe disease when infected with WNV.
- ▣ People with weakened immune systems or people with other chronic medical conditions are also at risk of severe illness.
- ▣ Severe illness is still relatively uncommon.

What Is Being Done To Protect Me From WNV?

- ▣ Public Health officials in Georgia are tracking the virus using surveillance information.
- ▣ Surveillance identifies birds, horses, and mosquitoes that are positive for WNV and helps officials determine the areas where people are most at risk.
- ▣ Prevention programs are then started in high-risk areas.

What Can I Do To Protect Myself From WNV?

- ▣ There are two primary ways to protect yourself from WNV:
 - Personal protection (preventing mosquitoes from biting you)
 - Source reduction (preventing mosquitoes from breeding near your home)
- ▣ It is important that Georgians practice both these methods of WNV prevention

Personal Protection

- ▣ The mosquito that most commonly carries WNV likes to bite people in early morning and early evening hours.
- ▣ If you can, stay inside at dusk and dawn to avoid mosquito bites.
- ▣ If you must go outside at these times, wear long sleeves and long pants to reduce the amount of skin exposed for mosquitoes to bite.

Personal Protection

- ▣ Some mosquitoes are always active. If you must be outside when mosquitoes are biting, wear insect repellent containing 10-35% DEET. The insect repellent may list this chemical as N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide. Use repellents that contain no more than 30% DEET on children.
- ▣ Apply insect repellent to all exposed skin.
- ▣ ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS.

Personal Protection

- ▣ Other repellents found to be effective by the CDC include those containing picaridin, PMD, and IR3535.
- ▣ Make sure all your windows have tight-fitting screens without any holes in them.

Source Reduction

- ❑ Eliminating mosquito breeding areas around your home is an excellent way to reduce your risk of being bitten by a mosquito.
- ❑ Many species of mosquitoes do not fly very far from where they breed.
- ❑ If you have mosquitoes in your yard then you should eliminate any sources of water where they may be breeding.

Source Reduction

- ▣ To eliminate mosquito breeding areas:
 - Dispose of old tin cans, jars, tires, plant pots, and any other container that can hold water.
 - Store wheelbarrows, buckets, boats, etc. upside down so water cannot accumulate in them.
 - Inspect rain gutters and downspouts and remove any leaves and other debris.

Source Reduction

- ▣ To eliminate mosquito breeding areas:
 - Empty stagnant bird baths, lily ponds, wading pools, etc. at least once a week.
 - Properly maintain and treat backyard swimming pools.
 - ▣ Cover any pool not in use so rainwater and leaves do not accumulate in it.
 - ▣ Be sure the cover does not hold pockets of water.

A Mosquito Bit Me - What Should I Do?

- ▣ Most mosquitoes do not carry WNV, and most people infected with WNV do not get sick, so you should not worry.
- ▣ If you develop a fever, prolonged headache, or symptoms of brain or nervous system infection (stiff neck, disorientation or confusion, or muscle weakness) within 2 weeks you should see your doctor.

For More Information

- ▣ Georgia Department of Public Health Mosquito-Borne Diseases Website:
 - <http://dph.georgia.gov/mosquito-borne-viral-diseases>

- ▣ CDC West Nile Virus Website:
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

- ▣ Still have questions about West Nile Virus? Call the Georgia Department of Public Health at 404-657-2588.