

## West Nile Virus

West Nile virus is established in Ontario and the disease is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. There is no way to predict how serious West Nile virus will be in any given year.

It's important you take steps that will protect you and your family from mosquito bites. The good news is it's easy.

- Use insect repellent when outdoors.
- Cover up.
- Clean up mosquito-friendly areas around your home regularly.

### Use insect repellent when outdoors

- Consider using federally registered personal insect repellents on exposed skin, such as those containing DEET. A light coating will do.
- 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 it 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.

*Always read the label directions for use.*

### If they can't get to you, you won't get bitten

- Minimize exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts or jackets and long pants.
- Mosquitoes are attracted to darker, more intense colours, so remember to wear lighter colours if possible.
- And if it's particularly bad out there and you need to be out for a long time, consider specialized bug-protective clothing.

### Clean up and ruin a mosquito's love life

The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas where they like to breed. Unlike birds and other insects, most mosquitoes do not fly very far and tend to stay close to their breeding sites and normal habitat.

Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water – even small amounts. The life cycle from egg to adult can take less than 10 days.

It's important to get rid of standing water around your home on a regular basis – once a week is a good standard. Adult mosquitoes like to rest in dense shrubbery. Keep bushes and shrubs clear of overgrowth and debris. And keep your compost pile turned on a regular basis.

### **Top ten mosquito love nests**

1. Bird baths
2. Old tires
3. Unused containers like barrels
4. Flower pot saucers
5. Swimming pool covers
6. Wading pools
7. Clogged gutters and eaves troughs
8. Clogged drainage ditches
9. Small containers like cans or bottle tops
10. Unused children's toys or vehicles

*From the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care*