



THE FACTS ON WEST NILE VIRUS

How is West Nile virus transmitted?

Mosquitoes are infected when they bite birds that already have the virus. Infected mosquitoes spread the disease to people, more birds, and other animals and can be found in cities, towns and rural areas.

What are the chances of getting sick from this virus?

For most people, the chance is small. Even if the virus is known to be active in your area, only a very small percentage of mosquitoes is likely to be infected. This means the likelihood of contracting the virus is minimal. Most people who get infected do not become seriously ill.

The chances do, however, increase with age. But the bottom line is that less than 1% of people who get West Nile virus will become seriously ill.

To understand your level of risk, it's important to know if the virus is active in your neighbourhood or area. Contact your local public health authority for more information.

What are the symptoms of West Nile virus infection?

Many people have no symptoms at all. Others may have mild flu-like symptoms like fever, headaches, fatigue and body aches. Anyone who has symptoms like severe headaches, a high fever and weakness should call or visit his health care provider right away.

How can I protect myself, my family, and my community?

The best way to reduce the risk of infection is to reduce the risk of mosquito bites. You can:

- Reduce mosquito breeding grounds by regularly draining standing water, e.g. in flower pots or old tires around your home, and by changing water in birdbaths and pet bowls twice a week.
- Make sure door and window screens fit tightly, and are free of rips and tears.
- Limit the time you spend outdoors at dawn and dusk.
- Wear light-coloured clothing, long sleeve shirts, long pants and a hat outside.
- Use approved insect repellents that contain DEET or other approved ingredients. Follow directions carefully.
- Report dead birds (e.g. crows, jays, magpies and ravens) in your area to the local public health authority or provincial health ministry.

This information is brought to you through the collaboration of your local retailers.

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To find more detailed information on West Nile virus or to link to your provincial or territorial government Web sites, visit Health Canada's West Nile virus Web site at:

www.westnilevirus.gc.ca

To receive your free copy of our detailed West Nile virus brochure, get tips on insect repellents or to find the number of your local public health authority, call:

1 800 816-7292 (toll-free)