

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS FOR PEEL RESIDENTS



Peel Health has worked closely with the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, Credit Valley Conservation and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to develop a local West Nile Virus Prevention and Control Plan. The Plan is based on the latest recommendations from Health Canada and the US Centres for Disease Control.

Activities outlined in the plan include public education, surveillance (monitoring) and mosquito control. The complete Plan is available on the WNV Web site at [www.peel-bugbite.ca](http://www.peel-bugbite.ca)

Beginning in mid-May, environment-friendly pesticides will be used to control mosquito larva (immature mosquitoes) in roadside catch basins and some other bodies of standing water where they breed. Details of pesticide application will be published in advance in local newspapers and posted at treatment locations. This notice provides information about West Nile Virus and steps you can take to protect yourself.

## What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne infection that was first isolated in Africa in 1937. The virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by biting an infected bird.

The virus was first found in North America in 1999. By 2002, it spread to 44 states and five provinces in Canada, including Ontario.

## How serious is WNV?

Research indicates that about one out of five people who are bitten by a mosquito infected with WNV will develop symptoms. Most people who are infected have either no symptoms or a mild illness known as West Nile fever. In about one per cent of infected individuals, WNV can cause severe illness resulting in hospitalization. Rarely, the disease can be fatal. Some people (even with milder illness) find that it can take months to feel well again after being infected with WNV.

## What are the symptoms of WNV?

In humans, most infections of the virus result in no symptoms. In those who do become ill, symptoms such as fever, extreme tiredness, frontal headache, muscle aches, and skin rash are most common. More serious symptoms can include neck stiffness, muscle weakness, and confusion. The time between infection and the onset of symptoms, called the incubation period, is between three and 15 days.

If you have symptoms listed above, you should seek medical attention. Extreme swelling or infection at the site of the mosquito bite is another reason to seek medical help but it does not mean you have WNV.

## How do people get WNV?

People become infected with the virus through a mosquito bite. WNV is not spread through person-to-person contact such as touching or through coughing, sneezing or drinking from a shared cup. The virus has not been transmitted to humans through contact with an animal infected with the virus. There have been no cases of WNV in humans from contact with infected birds. However, dead birds can carry a variety of diseases and should not be handled with bare hands. When dealing with a dead bird, use a shovel to place the bird in a double plastic bag or use a double plastic bag as a glove to pick it up.

Rarely WNV can be transmitted through blood transfusion and organ transplants if the donor was recently infected with WNV. WNV can also be transmitted from a mother to her unborn child or through breast milk, but these events are rare. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the risk from WNV.

## Who is at risk for WNV?

While anyone can be infected with WNV, the chances of having a severe illness are greater as you get older, even if you are healthy. You may be at greater risk if you have a weakened immune system.

**For more information about WNV or the Region of Peel's 2003 WNV Prevention and Control Plan call Health Line Peel at 905-799-7700, Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or visit [www.peel-bugbite.ca](http://www.peel-bugbite.ca) Caledon residents call toll-free at 905-584-2216.**

## Report dead crows

Dead crows are an important sign of West Nile Virus (WNV). Peel Health needs your help in monitoring for dead crows. If you find a dead crow, call Health Line Peel. You will be asked about the location of the bird. All reported dead crows will be picked up by local animal services. Crows are large black birds with black beak, eyes and feet.

**To report dead crows, call Health Line Peel at 905-799-7700, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dead crows may also be reported on Saturday - Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Caledon residents call toll-free at 905-584-2216.**

Not all dead crows will be tested. Once WNV is established in Peel, there is no need to test dead crows. However, reporting dead crows will still be important to monitor the spread of the virus.

There have been no cases of WNV in humans from contact with infected birds.

You don't need to report other dead birds. Use a shovel to place the bird in a double plastic bag or use a double plastic bag as a glove to pick up the bird and place it in the garbage.

## Keep Mosquitoes out of Your Backyard

Mosquitoes breed in standing water that is present for more than a week. Here is what you can do to help minimize the mosquito breeding grounds around your home:

- Recycle/dispose of old tires, plastic containers, paint cans or other containers that can hold water
- Drain water regularly from rain barrels and swimming pool covers
- Make sure your eavestroughs, flowerpots, window boxes and planters drain properly
- Change the water in bird baths at least once a week
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling and trash containers to allow water to drain
- Turn over all yard items including wheelbarrows, canoes, toys and plastic wading pools to drain standing water
- Remind or help your neighbours to eliminate breeding sites on their properties
- If you are using a barrel to collect rainwater for your plants and garden, cover it with a screen to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in it

## Protect Yourself From Mosquito Bites

- Avoid areas with large numbers of mosquitoes
- Consider staying indoors from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active
- Wear light-coloured clothing, including long sleeves, long pants, socks and a hat **whenever you are outdoors** (even when you are in your back yard) especially from dusk to dawn
- Check all window and door screens in your home to ensure there are no tears or holes for mosquitoes to enter
- Use insect repellent. Always read manufacturer's instructions. Spray clothing with mosquito repellents containing no more than 30 per cent DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) to ward off mosquitoes that may bite through thin clothing. Higher concentrations provide no additional protection and may act as an irritant. Store DEET out of reach of children.
- Children should wear a repellent with no more than six to 10 per cent DEET
  - DEET-containing repellent should not be used on children under six months of age
  - DEET may be considered for children aged six months to two years
  - Do not apply DEET more than three times a day to children between ages two to 12

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from pg. 21  
**Saturday, May 10**

**Garage/plant sale:** Churchill Community Church (corner of Third Line & Erin-Halton Town Line), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Garage sale, raffle, baking, plants, vendors and crafts.

**Museum auction:** Halton Museum Foundation hosts an auction; preview, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., auction 1-4 p.m. Tickets (\$10/adults). Pre-registration required. Call 905-875-2200, ext. 0.

**Monday, May 12**

**Valdy:** Canadian folk singer Valdy will perform at Robert Little School in Acton, 7 p.m. Proceeds to the Robert Little School. Tickets (adults \$10, children 10 and under \$5) are at the school, 519-853-2540, A Novel Escape, 905-702-1851 or David Burland, 519-853-3269.

**Tuesday, May 13**

**Fair planning:** Georgetown Agricultural Society is looking for new members to help organize the Georgetown Fall Fair and other events. The group meets 8 p.m. at the Georgetown Seniors Centre. Info: 519-853-1465 or 905-873-6157.

**Wednesday, May 14**

**Esquering Historical Society:** The Society and members Bill and Kathy Sandford invite the public to tour of the historic former Acton Town Hall and learn about the struggles to save it from demolition. Meet at the hall on Bower Ave. at 7:30 p.m.

**West Nile info meeting:** Friends of Fairy Lake host a West Nile Virus information session with a speaker from Credit Valley Conservation, 7 p.m. at the Acton Arena. Friends are in need of more members and volunteers to participate in upcoming projects. Info: 519-853-4031.

**Amnesty meeting:** Come and support the Georgetown Amnesty Intl. Group by writing a letter or signing a petition to protest the use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone and other countries. Meeting at the Shepherd's Crook, Main St., at 8 p.m.

**Horseshoe Club:** Georgetown Horseshoe Club runs its Fun League, May 14 to Sept. 24 at the Georgetown Fairgrounds, 7-9 p.m. Includes weekly 50/50 draw, tournaments and end-of-season banquet with prizes. Fee is \$50. To register call Carolyn, 905-877-1242 or 905-877-3814.

**La Leche League:** Expectant and new mothers meets at 7:30 p.m. for breastfeeding support and encouragement at the local La Leche League meeting. Info: Samantha at 905-702-8675.



**Y** With more than a dozen program choices and camp sites in the Greater Toronto Area, there's a camp that is right for your child.  
YMCA  
416-928-9622 or 1-800-223-8024  
Call now to register.

**Region of Peel**  
Working for you