

West Nile virus

Spoil a mosquito's dinner plans

Protect yourself ... Cover up ... Wear repellent

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 because of infection 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 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." Eliminate standing water which may gather in pool covers, flower pots, children's pools, old tires and birdbaths.

Cover up

Mosquitoes are most active between dusk and dawn. If you need to be outside at this time, cover up and use an insect repellent for extra protection. Make sure the screens on your home are tight-fitting and in good repair.

WHAT YORK REGION IS DOING ...

The York Region West Nile virus Control Plan for 2009 is multi-faceted and includes vector control activities, public education, mosquito control activities (including larviciding), mosquito and human surveillance.

What is larviciding?

Larviciding is a low risk and effective measure for the control of West Nile virus when used according to label instructions. 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 rear yard catch basins located on private property will be treated with larvicide on a case-by-case basis. For more information call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.york.ca.

Ontario's Dead Bird Program No Longer in Effect

With the continued presence of West Nile virus from year to year, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has confirmed West Nile virus is established in Ontario. As a result, Ontario will no longer be conducting a West Nile virus dead bird surveillance program. Along with other municipalities across Ontario, York Region will no longer pick up dead birds or ask residents to report dead bird sightings in 2009.

Residents who find a dead bird are asked to dispose of it as follows:

- Do not use your bare hands to handle a dead bird. Always wear leak-proof rubber gloves or use two layers of a leak-proof plastic bag inverted over your hand.
- Bury the bird at least two feet deep on your property.
- Do not dispose of dead birds through the municipal garbage systems.
- After disposing of a dead bird, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water.

For more information about West Nile virus contact York Region *Health Connection* 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.york.ca

York Region

York Region Community and Health Services does not recommend the use of bat boxes as an effective method for mosquito control as several bats in York Region have tested positive for rabies in past summers.