

# Health Unit Media Release

July 30, 2013



## Working Together to Reduce West Nile Virus Infections

**We all play a role in reducing the number of mosquitoes in our communities, and when we all do our part we will reduce the risk of West Nile Virus.**

**Each homeowner** is encouraged to remove standing water that provides breeding areas for mosquitoes from their property. Most mosquitoes do not travel large distances. Mosquitoes that breed within your space are likely to bite you. Protecting yourself from bites by wearing light coloured clothing and applying insect repellents containing the appropriate concentrations of DEET is also recommended.

**The municipality** is charged with the responsibility of ensuring proper drainage on municipally owned lands and public ditches. The roads departments have the knowledgeable staff and proper equipment to ensure this is achieved. Additionally, it is a municipal responsibility to address complaints regarding standing water on private land within its jurisdiction, using applicable property standards bylaws. Should positive mosquito pools be identified in a municipality, it is also the responsibility of council to take the necessary control actions as recommended by the Medical Officer of Health.

**The health unit** has the responsibility of assessing the risk for WNV within the three counties each year. The presence of the virus in mosquitoes is an early sign that the virus is gaining a presence in an area. The health unit is also responsible for following up any human cases of diseases and, more importantly, trying to prevent human cases by educating the public on strategies that reduce mosquito breeding and the resulting human bites.

**Individuals** have the responsibility to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Mosquitoes bite mainly at dusk and dawn be sure to protect yourself by wearing light-coloured clothing, including long sleeves, pants and hats, to cover exposed skin and using a mosquito repellent containing the appropriate amount of DEET.

**WNV is a preventable disease and this can be easily done if we all work together to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and protect ourselves from being bitten by mosquitoes.**

## Protecting Yourself

Protecting yourself and your family from mosquito bites is the best prevention.

During mosquito season (May to September for most of Canada), limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn as much as possible, when mosquitoes are the most active. There are mosquito species that bite humans during the day, but these have not been known to carry the West Nile Virus.

Apply mosquito repellents to exposed skin sparingly. An effective repellent contains 20 – 30 % DEET. Products with more than 30% DEET may cause side effects, particularly in children. Children should wear a mosquito repellent with a 6 - 10% DEET concentration. **DO NOT USE** personal insect repellents on children under two years of age.

- Wear long pants and long sleeves, as well as shoes and socks when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear loose clothes made of tightly woven materials that keep mosquitoes away from the skin.

- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies when outdoors.
- Repair or replace old and torn screens in doors, windows, and vents that no longer prevent mosquitoes from entering your home. Repair any other possible access points into your home.
- If you choose to use an insect spray in the patio and garden area, be sure to follow label directions carefully.
- If mosquitoes get into your home, you might find them resting on walls, under sinks, in closets or the basement. If you use a commercial insect spray, be sure to follow label instructions carefully.
- Citronella candles used outdoors around patios, picnic tables, and decks to repel mosquitoes are not very effective mosquito control options.
- Bug zappers (electrocutor traps) placed out of doors have not been proven effective in reducing or eliminating mosquito populations.
- Electronic “mosquito repellents” that emit high frequency sound do not repel mosquitoes.
- Claims that certain plants placed around a porch or deck will repel mosquitoes are not supported by scientifically based test results.

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