

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS

Mosquitoes can be a problem from early spring to late fall. Mosquito's bites can be very itchy and cause serious allergic reactions in some people. Mosquitoes can also transmit West Nile virus after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of birds that carry the virus.

The risk of contacting West Nile virus is relatively low. The *Culex tarsalis* mosquito, which makes up a small portion of the total mosquito population, is a known carrier of the virus. About 80 per cent of those who become infected with West Nile are not even aware they have contacted the virus and don't experience any symptoms. About 15-20 per cent of those infected may experience flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache or rash. Less than one in 150 infected individuals will experience West Nile neurological syndrome. Symptoms include high fever, headache and neck stiffness, stupor and disorientation, coma, tremors, occasional convulsions or marked weakness and paralysis.

### How to Reduce the Risk of Mosquito Bites

- Remove all sources of standing water where mosquitoes lay their eggs, such as pools, puddles, etc.
- Cut back dense plants and bushes where mosquitoes rest
- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active
- Do not wear strong fragrances
- Wear long sleeves, long pants and light-coloured clothing
- Apply insect repellents containing DEET

The most effective insect repellent is DEET. Different concentrations of DEET offer different levels of protection against mosquitoes (see DEET concentration and protection time table). It is safe when used according to the label directions.

DEET is not safe on infants younger than six months of age. For children six months and older, products containing 10 per cent DEET or less are considered safe (see box: DEET concentration for different ages) For children six months to two-years-old, if there is a high risk of complications from insect bites (e.g. in areas where there are reports of West Nile virus activity) products containing 10 per cent DEET may be used once a day for up to several days. Parents should apply insect repellent to their hands first and then apply it on the child.

<b>DEET concentration for different ages</b>		
<b>AGE</b>	<b>DEET concentration</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Less than six months	Do not use!	Cover baby with mosquito netting
Six months to two years	10 per cent or less	Maximum of one application per day
Two to 12 years	10 per cent or less	Maximum of three applications per day
12 years or older	30 per cent or less	Safe to use for pregnant or breast-feeding women

<b>DEET concentration and protection time</b>	
<b>DEET concentration (by %)</b>	<b>Protection time (hours)</b>
30	Six
15	Five
10	Three