



## **West Nile Virus Disease Fact Sheet**

1. **What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?** – During most of the 20th Century, WNV was usually found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. However in the summer of 1999, WNV was detected in New York City and over the next four years it spread throughout North America. Since 2004, a continent-wide WNV epidemic flares up in the summer and continues into the fall as infected mosquitoes spread the virus from birds to horses, humans and other animals.

### **2. What are the Symptoms of WNV?**

- a. Only one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. Associated symptoms can include blindness, disorientation, coma, convulsions, headache, high fever, muscle weakness, neck stiffness, numbness, paralysis, stupor, and tremors. These symptoms may last for several weeks, and the neurological effects may be permanent.
- b. Up to 20% of WNV infected people will have symptoms such as fever, head and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last from a few days to several weeks.
- c. Approximately 80% of people who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms.

3. **What Can I Do to Prevent WNV Infection?** – Get outside and enjoy the summer, but remember that WNV infected mosquitoes are on the wing in many areas of North America. Since there is no WNV vaccine for people, the best way to personal protection is to prevent infected mosquito bites. Therefore, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) recommends that children and adults routinely wear mosquito repellent while outdoors during the April – October mosquito season, especially during dusk and dawn when many mosquito species are actively feeding. Further, the insect repellent should contain DEET, and be applied following the manufacturer’s written directions.

4. **What Can I Do to Reduce the Number of Mosquitoes around My Home?** - Remember mosquitoes will lay eggs in any standing water that may remain for more than four days, and that the adult mosquitoes that emerge from any water

near your home will probably seek out your family for their first blood meal. Here are some simple protective steps you can take:

- a. Maintain good screens on your windows and doors to keep infected mosquitoes out.
- b. Regularly empty any outside containers, or drill drainage holes in their bottoms.
- c. Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- d. Clean clogged roof gutters that may allow the pooling of rain water.
- e. Do not allow water to stagnate in either bird baths or ornamental ponds.
- f. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools and remove standing water from pool covers.
- g. Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that routinely collects on your property.
- h. Remove discarded tires from your property as they make an excellent larva habitat.
- i. For standing water that can't be eliminated, residents can buy either *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti), or *Bacillus sphaericus* (Bsp) tablets at any lawn and garden store. After such a tablet is thrown into the water the bacteria will infect and kill any mosquito larvae present, but the water will remain safe for people, pets, aquatic life and plants.

#### **5. For more information about Adult Mosquito Spraying:**

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/resources/wnv\\_ReportOverview.htm#yocando](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/resources/wnv_ReportOverview.htm#yocando)

#### **6. For more information about West Nile Virus Encephalitis:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.

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