

Community Notice

One human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) has been confirmed on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

There have also been human cases of WNV in Brant; for more information please call Courtney Westerhof, Media Contact, Brant County Health Unit @ 519-753-4937 ext. 347 or by email - communications@bchu.org

WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially deadly virus that is mainly transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people infected with the virus experience flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches and fatigue.

Sometimes though, the virus can cause severe illnesses, including meningitis and encephalitis. The chances of getting WNV from an infected mosquito are low. While anyone can become infected with WNV, the risk of severe illness increases with age.



WHAT CAUSES WEST NILE VIRUS?

A bite from an infected mosquito can cause infection with West Nile Virus. Infected mosquitoes can spread the virus to humans and other animals.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS WEST NILE VIRUS?

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Most people (70% to 80%) who are infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms. Some people experience **mild symptoms** that include: fever, headache, body aches, mild rash, and swollen glands. These symptoms usually appear within 2 to 15 days after infection. Anyone infected with West Nile virus can be at risk of developing more severe symptoms and health effects. Adults 50 years or older and those with underlying medical conditions or weaker immune systems, are at greater risk.

Serious symptoms can include: rapid onset of severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, nausea or vomiting (sometimes both), difficulty swallowing, drowsiness and confusion. People can also get serious symptoms such as; loss of consciousness, lack of coordination, muscle weakness and paralysis.

In general, recovery can take a week for mild cases. Some severe cases could experience a variety of health effects for many months to years after their initial illness. Some severe cases of the disease can be fatal.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU BECOME ILL?

See your health care provider immediately if you develop symptoms of West Nile virus after getting a mosquito bite. (Health Canada)

If you have any further questions regarding WNV please call :

Ohsweken Public Health Office @ 519-445-2672.

Six Nations Health Promotions, Community Educator program 519-445-2809.

Brant County Health Unit @ 519-753-4937 ext. 347



MOSQUITO SURVEILLANCE Update;

The Community Educator Program has been doing annual Mosquito Surveillance during the months of July through October, as this is the time frame when mosquitoes are most abundant. Mosquitoes are collected once per week from 4 districts of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and sent to the lab. All mosquitoes collected are tested to for West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV).

How is West Nile virus spread?

West Nile virus is usually spread by the bite of a mosquito that has fed on an infected bird. In very rare cases, West Nile virus can be spread through:

- blood transfusion
- organ or tissue transplants
- pregnancy (from mothers to unborn babies)
- breast milk
- exposure of laboratory workers from infected medical specimens

You cannot get West Nile virus by:

- donating blood
- touching or kissing a person with the virus
- touching nurses or others who care for someone with the virus

Canadian Blood Services and hema-Quebec routinely test blood donations in Canada for the presence of West Nile virus. This is done to avoid accidental infection through blood transfusion.

How can West Nile virus infections be prevented?

The best way to avoid becoming infected with West Nile virus is to prevent mosquito bites. Mosquitoes are often most active at dawn (first light) and dusk (just before dark).

Cover Exposed skin

When you are outside; wear long pants and loose fitting shirts with long sleeves, socks and a hat, (try a mosquito net over your hat to protect your head, light-colored clothing (mosquitoes are attracted to dark colors).

Use insect repellent

When you are outside, you should use insect repellents (bug sprays and lotions) that contain the chemicals DEET or Icaridin. Please refer to the directions on the bottle, for proper use.

How can you reduce mosquito habitats near your home?

Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water (water that does not move or flow). Get rid of standing water around your home by following these tips: drain or dry off water in old tires (even tire swings), rainwater barrels, children's toys, flowerpots and wading pools, clean eaves troughs regularly to prevent clogs that trap water, tip fishing boats and gear onto their sides to drain and replace the water in outdoor pet dishes and bird baths at least 2 times a week.

(Health Canada)

