



The following is a message from
Lorraine Dudley, RN,
Parish Nurse...

West Nile Virus

The mosquito season is upon us! With the recent mix of hot and muggy weather, mosquitoes bring more than bites - they bring West Nile Virus.

WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS? West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus originally found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. In 1999 an outbreak was detected in the United States with 62 human cases and 7 deaths reported in New York. Since 1999 WNV has spread rapidly into other parts of the country. In Minnesota several cases of West Nile Virus have been reported in the last few years with some fatalities.



WNV MOSQUITOES

WNV is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus has been isolated from at least 43 species of mosquitoes throughout the world, 17 of these species are present in Minnesota. The Metropolitan Mosquito Control District (MMCD) is working to identify which species of mosquitoes may be the most efficient carriers of the disease in Minnesota.



WNV HOSTS

Wild birds are the primary hosts of WNV. The virus has been isolated from a variety of bird species, including crows, ducks, pigeons, and many songbirds. WNV is circulated between the wild bird population and bird-feeding mosquitoes. Most birds in the U.S. infected with WNV show no symptoms. However, the American Crow and related species (raven, blue jay and robin) appear to be more susceptible to the virus. Dead birds are an important indicator of virus activity and should be reported. There is no evidence that a person can get WNV from handling live or dead infected birds. To report dead birds contact: MMCD at 651/645-9149, the Minnesota Department of Health at 612/676-5414 or report online at www.healthstate.mn.us. Look for the dead bird report form.



WNV IN HUMANS

Most people infected with WNV show no signs of illness from the disease. However, some individuals experience a rapid onset of symptoms most often characterized by high fever, headache, backache, fatigue and nausea. While there is no cure for the virus, symptoms can be treated. Most people recover from the infection within two weeks, but approximately 10% of the clinical cases are fatal. Fatal cases, as well as symptomatic cases, are more prevalent in people older than 50 years of age.

HORSES & OTHER MAMMALS

Horses infected with WNV have had a moderate to high fatality rate. Symptoms may include fever, weakness, staggering and paralysis. A WNV vaccine is currently available for horses: owners can consult their veterinarians about availability. Other mammals including sheep, hamsters and mice have shown symptoms of WNV ranging from mild illness to death. Dogs and cats appear to be more resistant to WNV, but there have been reported cases.



WHAT CAN I DO

Many of the mosquito species that can carry WNV develop in artificial containers. You can reduce mosquito populations by eliminating standing water in old tires, unused birdbaths, unused pools, buckets and other containers.



PERSONAL PRECAUTIONS

Ways you can reduce annoyance and risk of mosquito-borne disease:

- ✓ Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves and pants
- ✓ Use insect repellents. Repellents that contain DEET (30% for Adults, 10% for children) can be very effective in preventing mosquito bites. Follow directions before using. Use of an insect repellent on children less than a year old is not recommended. Infants should be protected from mosquito bites with netting over a stroller or buggy.
- ✓ Limit outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active.



Prepared by Metropolitan Mosquito Control District
 651/645-9149 FAX 651/645-3246 www.mmcd.org

