

West Nile virus



How Can I Protect Myself and My Family from West Nile virus?

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that is primarily passed to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Everyone who is outside during the summer months should take the following steps to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes:

1. Consider using insect repellent

- Only use insect repellents that are federally regulated.
- Look for registered personal insect repellents that have one of the following active ingredients: DEET; P-methane 3, 8-diol; soybean oil; citronella.
- Follow all the label directions including protection times, restrictions for use on young children and the maximum number of applications per day.
- Choose a product that meets your needs. If you plan to be outdoors for a short period of time for example, choose a product with a low concentration of repellent and repeat application only if you need a longer protection time.

For more information about personal insect repellents, visit Health Canada's website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca and search for "insect repellents".

2. Clean up around the house

The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas of standing water where they are likely to breed. Here are some tips:

Check containers of standing water

- Clean up and empty containers where water collects, such as in old tires, flower pots, wheelbarrows, barrels or tin cans that are outdoors.
- Change water in bird baths weekly.
- If appropriate, drill holes in the bottoms of containers so water can not collect.

Check swimming or wading pools

- Immediately remove water that collects on pool covers.
- Make sure the pool pump is circulating water.
- Turn over wading pools when not in use.
- Check and clear eaves and drains.
- Clear leaves and twigs from eavestroughs, storm and roof gutters throughout the summer.
- Make sure drainage ditches are not clogged.
- Check your roof frequently for standing water.

Perform regular home and lawn maintenance

- Remove decaying debris (e.g., leaves, garden clippings) around the house as they may end up in the storm sewers and become a food source for mosquito larvae.
- Turn over compost frequently.
- Clear out dense shrubbery where mosquitoes like to rest.
- Make sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair.

3. Protect yourself outdoors at times when mosquitoes are most active

- If possible, avoid outdoor activity in the early morning and the early evening; this is when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear light-coloured clothing when going outside since mosquitoes are attracted to dark, more intense colours.
- Wear long sleeved shirts or jackets, long pants and socks.
- Tuck pant legs into socks for extra protection.
- Consider using an insect repellent.

Are bat houses a good way to protect against West Nile virus?

York Region Community and Health Services does not recommend the use of bat houses as an effective method for mosquito control. Bats have tested positive for rabies in past years.