

June 3, 2005
2005/nr-045

ONTARIANS URGED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST WEST NILE VIRUS *Warm Weather Brings Reminder On How To Avoid Mosquitoes*

TORONTO – The warm weather is here and so are the mosquitoes, which means it's time to take precautions against getting West Nile virus, Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, said today.

"West Nile virus can be prevented and we want all Ontarians to stay safe and healthy this summer," Dr. Basrur said. "Although West Nile virus isn't as prevalent in the province as it used to be, it is still around and Ontarians need to continue to be vigilant about protecting themselves against the disease."

Some of the more common ways to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Clearing eavestroughs and removing stagnant water
- Using federally registered personal insect repellents, such as those containing DEET
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants when going outside between dusk and dawn.

"We're helping Ontarians learn about the benefits of reducing the number of mosquitoes around the home," Dr. Basrur said. "There are simple and practical measures everyone can take to protect themselves against getting bitten."

Information on West Nile virus is available through the ministry's website, www.health.gov.on.ca, or www.HealthyOntario.com. Ontarians can also phone Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007) or their local public health unit.

Last year, there were 14 cases of West Nile virus in Ontario.

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For further information:

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