

# How to protect yourself from West Nile virus

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## Today, mosquitoes are more than a nuisance

West Nile virus is established in Ontario and the disease is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. There is no way to predict how serious West Nile virus will be in any given year.

## West Nile virus fast facts

- West Nile virus first appeared in Ontario in 2001.
- The virus is transmitted by mosquitoes that become infected by feeding on an infected bird.
- Of those who show symptoms, most will experience mild illness including fever, headache, body ache, nausea, vomiting and rash on chest, stomach or back.
- About one in 150 people infected will experience serious symptoms including high fever, severe headache, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, tremors, numbness and sudden sensitivity to light.
- Symptoms usually develop between two and 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

## Cover Up

It's important you take steps that will protect you and your family from mosquito bites. The good news is, it's easy.

- Use insect repellent when outdoors.
- Cover up.
- Clean up mosquito-friendly areas around your home regularly.

## Use insect repellent when outdoors

Consider using federally registered personal insect repellents on exposed skin, such as those containing DEET. A light coating will do.

DEET-based repellents can also be used on top of clothing.

Do not use it under clothing.

The concentration of DEET should be no greater than 30% for adults, no greater than 10% for children, and should not be used on children under six months old.

Several DEET-free repellents are federally registered but provide a shorter time of effectiveness. If you are going outdoors for less than 30 minutes, these are safe, effective alternatives.

**Always read the label directions for use.**

**If they can't get to you, you won't get bitten.**

Minimize exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts or jackets and long pants.

Mosquitoes are attracted to darker, more intense colours, so remember to wear lighter colours if possible.

And if it's particularly bad out there and you need to be out for a long time, consider specialized bug-protective clothing.

## Clean up and ruin a mosquito's love life

The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas where they like to breed.

Unlike birds and other insects, most mosquitoes do not fly very far and tend to stay close to their breeding sites and normal habitat.

Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water – even small amounts. The life cycle from egg to adult usually takes less than seven days.

So it's important to get rid of standing water around your home on a regular basis – once a week is a good standard.

Adult mosquitoes like to rest in dense shrubbery. Keep bushes and shrubs clear of overgrowth and debris. And keep your compost pile turned on a regular basis.

## Top ten mosquito love nests

1. Bird baths
2. Old tires
3. Unused containers like barrels
4. Flower pot saucers
5. Swimming pool covers
6. Wading pools
7. Clogged gutters and eavestroughs
8. Clogged drainage ditches
9. Small containers like cans or bottle tops
10. Unused children's toys or vehicles

## For more information:

[www.health.gov.on.ca/westnile](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/westnile)

INFOline 1-877-234-4343

TTY 1-800-387-5559

For information on larviciding and adulticiding in your community, call your local public health unit.