



# WEST NILE VIRUS

You can contract West Nile Virus if you are bitten by an infected mosquito. West Nile disease is spread to humans and other mammals from mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. It is expected that the West Nile Virus may enter British Columbia during the coming year (2003).

While the risks of being infected and becoming seriously ill are low, anyone exposed to mosquitoes in an area that has West Nile Virus could potentially become infected.

## 1. Minimize your exposure to mosquitoes

- Wear protective clothing: baggy, long-sleeved shirts and pants, and light coloured clothing.
- When outdoors, use insect repellents that contain DEET\* or other approved ingredients\*\*. If you spray your clothing, there is no need to spray repellent containing DEET on the skin under your clothing.
- Use door and window screens, ensuring they fit tightly and are in good repair.
- Avoid staying outdoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, especially forested areas.

## 2. Eliminate Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Drain standing water from containers, tarps, recycle bins, garbage cans, etc.
- Remove any old unused items that collect water (e.g. tires) from your set or location.
- Cover containers that cannot be dumped with fine mesh screens.
- Unclog rain gutters.

Please contact your local civic office and health authority. If there is a large area of stagnant water of concern, not on your property, contact your local engineering or public works department. Arrangements may be made to drain it or prevent mosquitoes from breeding in it. In the Lower Mainland each municipality is responsible for West Nile/ Mosquito control.

Most people who are infected by the West Nile Virus experience no symptoms. About 20% experience fever, headache, body ache and rash lasting one week or less. In less than 1%, West Nile Virus can cause serious health effects such as meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). If you develop severe headache or neck stiffness without a cause, please consult your doctor.

### **West Nile Virus Information:**

**BC Centre for Disease Control:** [www.bccdc.org](http://www.bccdc.org) or telephone: 604-660-0581

**Health Canada:** [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/diseases/west\\_nile.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/diseases/west_nile.html)

**Insect Repellents Safe Work Practices:** <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla/english/pdf/pnotes/deet-e.pdf>

\**DEET* is a powerful chemical so please follow safe work procedures and instructions carefully. DEET should not be used on children under 6 months of age. The percentage of DEET in repellents should not exceed 30% for adults or 10% for children.

\*\* Use discretion. Alternatives to DEET include a soybean based product like *Bite Blocker*, proven effective, but for a much shorter duration. A 23.8% DEET formula provided protection for over 5 hours. Bite Blocker protected for only 1.5 hours. Bug zappers kill good insects that eat mosquitoes, Ultrasonic devices have proven ineffective.

