

West Nile Virus Is Concern for Seniors

The West Nile virus was first introduced into the United States in 1999 and has been moving westward ever since. While it has not been found in the environment (in birds, mosquitoes or horses) in California, experts are predicting that it will arrive in California this year. West Nile virus is normally found in birds and is carried by some species of mosquitoes. Horses and humans can also become sick if infected with the virus.

Only some species of mosquitoes carry WNV and only some mosquitoes within those species are actually carriers of the virus. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a bird that is infected. Mosquitoes are then able to pass the virus on to humans or horses or other birds. Very few people who are infected with WNV show any symptoms at all. However, a small percentage of those infected with WNV do become severely ill. People who are older than 50 years of age have a higher risk of becoming more severely ill. The time period when WNV is considered to be of most concern is from June 15th – October 15th, especially during the months of August and September. Since the primary method of becoming infected with WNV is through the bite of an infected mosquito, the best way to prevent the disease is to reduce mosquito bites.

For more information about WNV in humans, contact 225-5591 or visit the following web sites:

www.shastapublichealth.net
or
<http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>



It is important to remember that mosquitoes breed in almost any body of water. Here are several things you can do to help reduce mosquito-breeding sites.

- Remember to dispose of tin cans, buckets, and other water holding containers.
- Remove old tires from your property.
- Keep rain gutters clean and working.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows.
- Change water in birdbaths and pet bowls weekly.
- Get rid of any stagnant water on your property.
- Have properly screened doors and windows.
- Fill in tree rot holes that hold water.
- Plant mosquito eating fish in ponds.
- Store boats covered or upside down.
- Keep grass cut short and shrubbery well-trimmed so adult mosquitoes cannot hide there.

To personally reduce your risk of mosquito bites remember to do the following:

- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors.
- Apply insect repellent thinly to exposed skin. Most effective are 35—50% DEET-containing repellents for adults (make sure it contains less than 10% DEET when applying to children and do not use DEET repellents in infants under 2 months).