



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

www.nwhu.on.ca

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Mosquitoes and West Nile virus – tracking and monitoring at the health unit

The health unit works to protect the health of Northwestern Ontario residents by monitoring potential health risks. To track West Nile virus risk, the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) does weekly mosquito trapping across the region during the summer months. Last year, 73 samples from 11 different trap sites were sent to a lab for mosquito identification and testing. The majority (72%) of mosquitoes trapped in the region in 2014 were NOT the type of mosquito that can spread West Nile virus and none of the mosquito pools sent for analysis tested positive for West Nile virus.

“Only certain kinds of mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus. The majority of mosquitoes the health unit trapped in 2014 were not the type of mosquito that can spread West Nile virus,” says Mike Mackie, Public Health Inspector at the NWHU. He continues, “Similar trapping, testing and reporting will occur during the 2015 summer months.”

The risk of coming into contact with the mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus in our region is low. The risk is not zero however. The best way to minimize your chances of infection with West Nile virus is to avoid mosquito bites by taking the following steps:

- Wear light-coloured long-sleeved clothing, pants and a hat when outside,
- Make sure your window screens are in good repair to keep mosquitoes outside,
- Choose an insect repellent that contains DEET (always read and follow label directions),
- Empty standing water around your home and property (e.g. flowerpots, gutters, pet water dishes, and birdbaths) on a regular basis, because mosquitoes breed in standing water.

Most people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms and do not feel sick. Some people will have mild symptoms that usually appear within 2 to 15 days after infection. These symptoms include fever, headache, body aches and mild body rash.

Less commonly, persons infected with West Nile virus will become severely ill with infection to the outer coating of the brain and spinal cord which can result in long term damage or death. If you or a family member are experiencing serious symptoms and health effects, or have concerns about any symptoms, contact your healthcare provider right away.

For more information on West Nile virus tracking or preventing mosquito bites please contact your local health unit or visit www.nwhu.on.ca.



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