

# WEST NILE VIRUS

## *What You Can Do to Protect Your Family*

*Information for this brochure provided courtesy of the LaGrange County Health Department*

### **General Steps You Can Take to Prevent West Nile Virus Encephalitis**

*The best way to protect yourself is to keep mosquitoes from biting you and reduce mosquito-breeding areas since mosquitoes transmit the virus. There is no vaccine for West Nile virus (WNV).*

Follow these steps every summer if you live in or visit an area with mosquitoes:

**Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET and follow the label directions.** Do not use DEET on infants, but cover baby's carriage or playpen with mosquito netting when outdoors. Do not apply DEET to the hands of children or around their mouth or eyes. Do not use concentrations of DEET greater than 10% on children, and for most purposes, products with greater than 35% are not needed on adults. Always use just enough repellent to cover skin and clothing. Do not place on skin covered by clothing and do not spray on the face.

**Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and shoes when outdoors, especially from dusk to dawn.** Clothing should be light-colored and tightly woven.

**Fix any holes in your screens and make sure they are tightly attached to all your doors and windows.**

**Minimize outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.**

**Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or camping.**

### **How Can I Reduce the Number of Mosquitoes Around My Home and Neighborhood?**

*To reduce mosquito populations around your home and neighborhood, get rid of any standing water available for mosquito breeding.* Mosquitoes will breed in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than **four days**. Here are some simple steps you can take:

**Dispose of, or empty, any water-holding containers on your property, like buckets or flowerpots.**

**Pay special attention to discarded tires that may have collected on your property. Tires are a common place for mosquitoes to breed.**

**Drill holes in the bottom of garbage containers that are left outdoors to let water drain out.**

**Clean clogged roof gutters;** remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of rainwater.

**Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.**

**Do not allow water to stagnate in birdbaths.** Aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with fish.

**Keep swimming pools clean and properly chlorinated;** remove standing water from pool covers.

**Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.**

**Repair failed or discharging septic systems.**

Preferred breeding areas are waters contaminated by manure and septic.

**Remove tall weeds and grass.**

### **West Nile Virus - Disease Facts**

The virus was discovered in 1937 in Africa, but was unknown in the U.S.A. until 1999 when an outbreak occurred in New York City.

The disease spread from NYC to the west coast in 3 years, an astonishing expansion.

**The disease is primarily a disease of birds transmitted by mosquitoes, but can also cause disease in humans and horses.**

Evidence of West Nile virus infections has been found in many other species, including squirrels, dogs, cats, bats, whitetail deer, black bears and alligators.

**Because the virus can survive the winter in hibernating mosquitoes or mosquito eggs, the risk of WNV cases will continue to be present each summer.**

### **West Nile Symptoms**

**Most people infected with West Nile virus will not develop symptoms, or will experience a mild illness.**

**Some people may become ill 3-15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. The symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches and sometimes a skin rash and swollen glands.**

**Infrequently, an infection may result in West Nile encephalitis, marked by headache, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, muscle tremors and/or weakness, and paralysis. A small number of cases have been fatal.**

**Severe illness and/or deaths are much more common in individuals over 50 years of age.** Full recovery may be prolonged, and some individuals may have permanent disabilities.

