



West Nile Virus: Advice for Persons 50 and Older

(Adapted from materials supplied by the New York State Bureau of Health)
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Since 1999 when West Nile virus was first identified in New York City, the virus has spread to a total of 45 States. In 2003, there was close to 3,000 cases of severe illness and 230 deaths attributed to WNV nationwide. In Maine during 2003, 98 birds from throughout the state tested positive for West Nile Virus. To date, there have not been any reported cases of WNV in humans in Maine.

Although the chances of a person becoming ill are small, those who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill from West Nile virus infection are persons who are over the age of 50. The Maine Bureau of Health and other state agencies are working to improve awareness about West Nile Virus. This handout provides the public with information on how to protect themselves and their families from the mosquito born infection.

You can reduce your risk of mosquito bites by adopting the following personal protection measures:

- Avoid being outdoors during peak periods of mosquito activity, such as dawn and dusk.
- Wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when mosquitoes are most active.
- Consider using a mosquito repellent, according to directions on the label.

CONTROL MOSQUITOES IN AND AROUND YOUR HOME

Many mosquitoes need standing water to lay their eggs. To reduce the mosquito population in and around your home, reduce or eliminate standing water by:

- Disposing of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.
- Removing all leaf debris and keeping brush trimmed.
- Drilling holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are kept outdoors.
- Making sure roof gutters drain properly, and cleaning clogged gutters in the spring and fall.
- Turning over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Changing the water in bird baths and animal dishes frequently.
- Regularly cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs.
- Draining water from pool covers.
- Using landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.

REPORTING DEAD BIRDS

Keeping track of the number of dead birds helps public health officials monitor the human health risk for West Nile virus. If you see a dead bird, contact the toll free Bird Reporting Line at 1-888-697-5846. Note: Even though not all dead birds will be collected or tested, all reports will be recorded and will help public health officials monitor the spread of West Nile virus in Maine.

For more information about West Nile virus contact the Bureau of Health, Division of Disease Control at (800) 821-5821 or visit our website at <http://www.state.me.us/dhs/boh/ddc/westnile.htm>