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Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

How to Protect Yourself and Yours Kids from West Nile Virus

By Susan Dunn

How to Protect Yourself and Yours Kids from West Nile Virus by Susan Dunn, MA, The EQ

Coach

"How to Protect Yourself and Yours Kids from West Nile Virus,"
by Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach

TAKE THE MOSQUITO-BAIT QUIZ:

Who is most likely to get bit by mosquitoes?

- a. Tom, who goes jogging at dawn in his shorts and tank top.
- b. Mary, who sprays her hair, puts on deodorant, perfume, sunscreen, and her sharp-but-scanty black patio dress, and heads for a late afternoon lawn party, ready to party into the night.
- c. Harry, who is into fixing cars but not into house and yard maintenance. His country acreage features discarded tires, weeds and dense shrubs, old window screens he's never replaced, and a stagnant fish pond.
- d. Neil, who sweats profusely and likes to wear white linen shorts and shirts with his Birkenstocks when sitting out back at dusk.
- e. Billy, age 4, who gets up at 6 a.m., eats a quick banana and then heads outside to play in the mud puddles on the patio.
- f. Ken's cookout guests who gather around the barbecue at dusk after a brisk game of volleyball, eating potato chips and peanuts while he cranks up the fire for hamburgers.

The answer: All of the above.

As the summer escalates, it's important to protect yourself and your children from mosquito bites. Mosquitoes carry viruses - encephalitis, malaria, dengue fever, and now West Nile - and the collective amount of virus builds as the summer progresses.

INSECT REPELLANT

How to Protect Yourself and Yours Kids from West Nile Virus

You're probably leery of insect repellants, especially DEET, so I offer other suggestions. Do consider its use in extreme situations. I haven't hesitated to use it when in the Caribbean (dengue fever) or St. Petersburg (built on a drained swamp), just as I got my immunizations up-to-date for travel in these countries. (Diphtheria outbreak in Moscow.)

I don't use insect repellants at home in the US, except when visiting my friends whose yard is a mosquito-breeding haven, and whose children lure me outside at dawn and dusk.

If you use insect repellent, be aware that the following things will dilute its effectiveness: rain, perspiration, swimming, many sunscreens, evaporation from wind or high temperatures, and absorption into the skin.

When applying, especially to children, read the instructions carefully, and follow them. This applies to both application and storage.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

1. Clean up your yard!

Mosquitoes breed in standing water, which requires a container. Eliminate anything around your yard that supplies a container for water - tires (the number one breeding site for mosquitoes in the US!), children's toys and play equipment, dishes left out, plant containers, dog water dishes, bird baths and water gardens that don't have circulating water. Eliminate weeds, shrubs and tall grass; that's where the adults like to hide.

2. Stay inside at dawn and dusk, especially when the air is calm.

This is the favorite time for the females, the biter.

3. Mosquitoes love carbon dioxide (CO₂) and lactic acid.

According to Anne Marie Helmenstine, Ph.D. (chemistry), we emit more CO₂ when we're hot and after we've been exercising. Burning candles and fires also emit CO₂. We emit more lactic acid when we've been exercising, and after having eaten salty foods or foods high in potassium.

4. Wear light, loose clothing that covers the body.

Mosquitoes prefer dark clothes. Mosquitoes prefer certain skin temperatures, often our hands and feet, because they're cooler, so wear socks and shoes.

5. Mosquitoes are worse in urban areas.

Chicago, Detroit and Boston have been high on the list. This is mainly because there are more people and also more discarded tires.

6. Mosquitoes are attracted to floral and fruity scents, and sweat.

The moisture and chemical mix of human perspiration is a big lure. Obviously don't wear perfume, but consider as well: sunscreen, suntan lotion, deodorant, hair spray, and the use of fabric softener on your clothing.

7. Mosquitoes appear to be repelled by some natural oils.

Citronella, castor, rosemary, lemongrass, cedar, peppermint, clove, and geranium. Bear in mind that "natural" doesn't always mean "safe," and individuals have different reactions to these natural oils.

8. Don't let them get into your house; they're just as happy to bite you inside as out.

Get screens up and keep them repaired, when you leave the house, open and close doors quickly, and educate your children about keeping doors closed.

9. Insect repellents bring mixed reviews, but here are two that appear to work well:

(1) Mosquito Dunks, which kill them before they're big enough to bite, available at:
<http://www2.yardiac.com>

(2) Mosquito magnet ® which "mimics a human by emitting a plume of carbon dioxide, heat and moisture, and a short-range attractant, octenol, which is irresistible to female mosquitoes," available here: <http://www.funbackyard.com> .

10. The most susceptible populations to any virus, including West Nile, are children, seniors and anyone with a compromised immune system.

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The History of the West Nile Virus

By Karen Foster

Where did it come from?

The West Nile virus was first isolated in 1937 in the West Nile district of Uganda. The disease has spread through many parts of Europe and Asia, as well as North and South America.

How did it spread?

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We do not know exactly how the virus spread but there are several theories. Most likely the West Nile virus was imported to other countries by a bird or mosquito that was infected by the disease. The virus has been found in over 150 different types of birds including: crows, ravens, blue jays and magpies. Out of the 74 different species of mosquitoes found in all parts of Canada, only ten have been found to carry the West Nile virus.

How is the West Nile virus transmitted?

Mosquitoes become carriers of the West Nile virus after feeding on the blood of birds infected with the virus. The West Nile virus is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Recently, scientists have discovered that people can become infected with the West Nile virus through other ways like blood transfusions and organ/tissue transplants. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the disease can be contracted by kissing or touching someone who is infected with it.

The West Nile virus poses the greatest risk to those with weakened immune systems or chronic disease and the risk of serious health issues pertaining to the virus increase with age. The risk of being infected with the West Nile virus is greatest during July and August, peak mosquito season. However, it is good to keep in mind that mosquito season lasts from as early as mid April until after the first hard frost usually in October.

Stopping the spread

The very best way to avoid contacting the West Nile virus is by minimizing your exposure to mosquitoes. Other ways to help stop the spread of the West Nile virus include:

- Eliminate mosquito breeding grounds around your home (these include places where standing water can collect such as wading pools, empty flower pots and bird baths)
- Report any dead birds found in your area to the local authorities.
- Use insect repellants that contain DEET and install screens in your windows and doors
- Use mosquito netting when camping

Keep in mind that although the West Nile virus is not likely to disappear any time in the near future, it is important to remember that the risk of contacting the West Nile virus is low and the risk of serious health effects from the disease even lower.

Karen Foster is the content manager and editor for Tiny Mosquito: Understanding the Mosquito. For more information about mosquitoes, visit her site at



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