WEST NILE VIRUS

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF
West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Most people (80%) who are infected with WNV will not get sick.

Some people (20%) who are infected with WNV will have a mild illness with symptoms like fever, headache, muscle aches, and possibly rash.
What Is West Nile Virus?

- Very few people (1 out of 150) infected with WNV will develop severe illnesses affecting the brain and nervous system.
- These illnesses, usually meningitis or encephalitis, have symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, and tremors.
Who Is At Risk?

- WNV is found throughout Georgia.
- Anyone who lives in an area where WNV is active has a low risk of becoming infected.
- People over the age of 50 are most at risk of developing severe disease when infected with WNV.
- People with weakened immune systems or people with other chronic medical conditions are also at risk of severe illness.
- Severe illness is still relatively uncommon.
Public Health officials in Georgia are tracking the virus using surveillance information. Surveillance identifies birds, horses, and mosquitoes that are positive for WNV and helps officials determine the areas where people are most at risk. Prevention programs are then started in high-risk areas.
What Can I Do To Protect Myself From WNV?

- There are two primary ways to protect yourself from WNV:
  - Personal protection (preventing mosquitoes from biting you)
  - Source reduction (preventing mosquitoes from breeding near your home)
- It is important that Georgians practice both these methods of WNV prevention
Personal Protection

- The mosquito that most commonly carries WNV likes to bite people in early morning and early evening hours.
- If you can, stay inside at dusk and dawn to avoid mosquito bites.
- If you must go outside at these times, wear long sleeves and long pants to reduce the amount of skin exposed for mosquitoes to bite.
Some mosquitoes are always active. If you must be outside when mosquitoes are biting, wear insect repellent containing 10-35% DEET. The insect repellent may list this chemical as N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide. Use repellents that contain no more than 30% DEET on children.

Apply insect repellent to all exposed skin.

ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS.
Personal Protection

- Other repellents found to be effective by the CDC include those containing picaridin, PMD, and IR3535.
- Make sure all your windows have tight-fitting screens without any holes in them.
Source Reduction

- Eliminating mosquito breeding areas around your home is an excellent way to reduce your risk of being bitten by a mosquito.
- Many species of mosquitoes do not fly very far from where they breed.
- If you have mosquitoes in your yard then you should eliminate any sources of water where they may be breeding.
To eliminate mosquito breeding areas:
- Dispose of old tin cans, jars, tires, plant pots, and any other container that can hold water.
- Store wheelbarrows, buckets, boats, etc. upside down so water cannot accumulate in them.
- Inspect rain gutters and downspouts and remove any leaves and other debris.
Source Reduction

- To eliminate mosquito breeding areas:
  - Empty stagnant bird baths, lily ponds, wading pools, etc. at least once a week.
  - Properly maintain and treat backyard swimming pools.
    - Cover any pool not in use so rainwater and leaves do not accumulate in it.
    - Be sure the cover does not hold pockets of water.
Most mosquitoes do not carry WNV, and most people infected with WNV do not get sick, so you should not worry.

If you develop a fever, prolonged headache, or symptoms of brain or nervous system infection (stiff neck, disorientation or confusion, or muscle weakness) within 2 weeks you should see your doctor.
For More Information

- Georgia Department of Public Health Mosquito-Borne Diseases Website:
  - http://dph.georgia.gov/mosquito-borne-viral-diseases

- CDC West Nile Virus Website:

- Still have questions about West Nile Virus? Call the Georgia Department of Public Health at 404-657-2588.