

Environmental Health & Prevention Services

West Nile Virus Update

Spring 2013



What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a virus spread by mosquitoes that can cause illness in humans. It was first identified in the province of West Nile, Uganda in 1937. West Nile virus activity has been found in Lambton County since 2001.

In 2012, there were 2 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus infection reported in Lambton County.

How is West Nile Spread?

West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an *infected mosquito*. Birds carry the virus; mosquitoes bite the birds and become infected. However, not all mosquitoes are infected with the virus.

There is no evidence to suggest that West Nile virus can spread directly from person to person. There is also no evidence that the virus spreads directly from birds or animals to humans.

The virus can also be spread by:

- organ transplant
- blood transfusions
- breast-feeding
- mother to fetus

*These account for only a few cases.

Who Is At Risk?

West Nile virus can affect people of any age and health. People with weakened immune systems and those over the age of 50 are at greater risk of developing serious illness from West Nile.

The Symptoms of West Nile Virus

Most people who become infected with West Nile do not get sick. For those who do become ill, symptoms occur 2-15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Symptoms can include mild fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, skin rash, and sore muscles.

In a few cases, the virus may cause swelling of the brain. This can result in the rapid onset of a severe headache, muscle weakness, high fever, stiff neck, and confusion. Long-term effects include tiredness, memory problems and depression.

West Nile Virus Protection

You can protect yourself and your family by reducing the chances of being bitten by mosquitoes.

- Apply an insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or skin. (Use a product that has no more than 30% DEET for adults). Avoid eyes and mouth.
- Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society advises that children aged 6 months to 2 years may receive 1 application per day of a product containing 10% DEET or less if chances of being bitten are high. **Do not** use DEET on children under 6 months of age.
- For children aged 2-12 years, use a product with 10% DEET or less. **Do not** apply to the face and hands. Limit to less than 3 times a day.
- Take extra care when outdoors between dusk and early morning when mosquito activity is high.

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COUNTY OF
LAMBTON

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Environmental Health & Prevention Services

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- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors.
- Ensure door and window screens fit tightly and do not have holes.

Reduce Mosquito Populations

Mosquitoes require stagnant water to lay their eggs and mature before becoming biting adults. Reduce the amount of stagnant water on your property and you will lower the risk for mosquito breeding sites.

- Drain water from containers and toys that collect water, such as garbage cans, pool covers, flower pots, tires, and tarps.
- Change water in wading pools, birdbaths, and pet bowls twice a week.
- Drain or drill holes in the bottom of containers so that water doesn't collect.
- Keep roof eaves clear of debris.
- Fill low-lying areas that hold water.
- Maintain pools and aerate ornamental ponds or stock with fish.
- Do not let grass clippings enter roadside gutters or catch basins as these are perfect mosquito breeding sites.

County of Lambton Standing Water By-law

No person shall from **April 1 to October 31** of any year:

- permit standing water to accumulate in debris, deep ruts and holes, excavations, depressions or any unprotected or unused wells on his/her property;
- permit a swimming pool, swimming pool cover, hot tub, wading pool or artificial pond located on his/her property to contain standing water.

To report a standing water complaint, contact Community Health Services Department at 519 383-8331 ext. 3580.

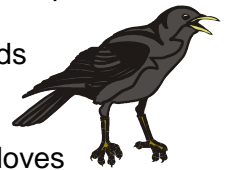
West Nile Virus Dead Bird Surveillance

The Community Health Services Department (CHSD) will continue its dead bird surveillance in 2012. In an effort to track the West Nile virus in Lambton County, the public is encouraged to report the sightings of ALL dead birds to Community Health Services.

In certain circumstances, adult crows and blue jays, dead for less than 24 hours, may be considered for testing. Crows and blue jays are seriously affected by this disease and are an indicator of West Nile in our community. **Please note that CHSD cannot collect every dead bird. If the bird will not be tested, you will be asked to dispose of the bird.**

If you find a dead bird:

- Call CHSD to report the location or use the online reporting form on our website. 519 383-3824 or toll-free 1-800-667-1839 ext. 3824. www.lambtonhealth.on.ca
- If you are not called within 24 hours, or the next business day, please dispose of the bird(s).
- Do not handle dead birds with bare hands. Use gloves and put the bird in a double plastic bag. If gloves are not available, turn a plastic bag inside out and scoop up the bird with the bag.
- If the dead bird has been reported but will not be tested, place the bagged carcass in an outdoor garbage can for disposal. If the bird will be tested, save the bird and CHSD will pick it up.
- For health and safety reasons, **do not bring dead birds directly to Community Health Services.** They will not be accepted.



For more about West Nile or to report a dead bird, contact Community Health Services at 519 383-3824 or toll-free 1-800-667-1839 ext. 3824. www.lambtonhealth.on.ca