

What is West Nile virus (WNV)?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a virus that is found in wild birds and carried by mosquitoes.

How is WNV spread?

WNV is spread to humans when a species of mosquito which has been infected with WNV bites a human. The infection may then spread to the human.

What are the symptoms of WNV?

The majority (80%) of humans infected with WNV show no signs of illness. Only 20% display very mild signs of illness (headache, fever, sore muscles, flu-like symptoms). See your doctor if you are concerned about any of these symptoms.

In very rare but serious cases, WNV can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

Who is at risk?

The elderly, the very young, and those with suppressed immune systems are most at risk. In 2004, no Canadians infected with West Nile died from the illness.

What is the risk of getting WNV in the Thunder Bay District?

The risk in the Thunder Bay District was low in 2004, according to a study* by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. The study found that:

- No human cases of WNV were reported in the District of Thunder Bay.
- 177 dead birds of the 265 dead birds reported to the Health Unit were from species highly susceptible to WNV.
- Only 14 dead birds submitted for testing were infected with WNV.
- Only 2% of the mosquitoes collected in Northwestern Ontario were the species which transmit WNV to birds (Culex restuans).
- No mosquito collected was infected with WNV.

Due to this low risk, it was not necessary to spray pesticides to reduce mosquito populations in the region. The use of pesticides is evaluated on a year-to-year basis.

* For a copy of the study, visit www.tbdhu.com.

Is there Treatment for West Nile?

There is no specific treatment or cure for WNV. People who get seriously ill may require hospitalization or nursing care.

What time of the year is WNV most likely to be a problem?

We don't have to worry about the disease in the Thunder Bay District until early August.

The risk of exposure to the disease is over when cool weather starts in September. Of course, if you travel to Southern Ontario or the United States, then you should try to reduce your risk of exposure to mosquitoes.

How will I know if there may be WNV in my neighbourhood?

Lots of dead birds, especially crows, ravens and blue jays, will provide you with the first indication that there is a problem. There are always birds that die; however, if there is a sudden increase in the number of dead birds then we know that something has changed. If you find a dead crow, raven or blue jay call the Crow Line at 625-8328 or toll free at 1-866-582-9003.



PREVENTION AND PROTECTION:

COVER UP!

Protect yourself from mosquito bites

When you go outside:

- Use insect repellants that contain DEET
The concentration of DEET should be no greater than 30 per cent for adults and no greater than 10 per cent for children.
Check the label for more detailed information or ask your pharmacist for help.
- Wear long sleeves
- Use mosquito netting products
- Wear light colours
- Tuck pants into socks for extra protection

CLEAN UP!

Reduce mosquito-breeding areas

- Empty containers with standing water
- Change water in bird baths at least once a week
- Turn over wading pools when not in use
- Clear leaves and twigs from eavestroughs, gutters and ditches
- Throw away lawn rakings, leaves and decaying debris
- Turn over compost frequently
- Clear out dense shrubbery
- Check window screens and frames for holes

CALL THE CROW LINE!

Report any dying or dead crow, raven or blue jay to our Crow Line. The bird must have died in the last 48 hours. The Health Unit will determine if the bird should be picked up and tested for WNV.

Report dead crows, ravens and bluejays to the Crow Line at 807-625-8328 or toll free at 1-866-582-9003

Find a dead crow, raven or bluejay?

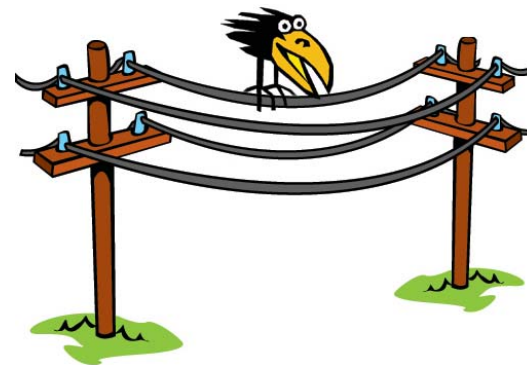
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For more information on West Nile, visit our website at www.tbdhu.com/inspection/westnile

Or visit

www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Health Canada)
www.health.gov.on.ca (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care)



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit
www.tbdhu.com

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West Nile virus
fight the bite!

Thunder Bay District Information Guide

