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Reduce mosquito breeding sites for West Nile protection

This summer, something as harmless as a mosquito bite could endanger your health.

Local health units are advising the public to protect themselves from mosquito bites to reduce the risk of infection, especially associated West Nile Virus, or WNv.

Although roughly 80 per cent of all WNv infections never amount to anything, an infected person could experience fever, headaches, fatigue, muscle pain or aches, malaise, nausea, anorexia, vomiting, myalgias and rash 2?10 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. One percent of the time, these infections can turn serious, affecting the nervous system (causing swelling of the brain and or spinal cord, possibly leading to paralysis) ? especially in people who are very young, very old, or have a compromised immune system.

Since, there is currently no vaccine against WNv the best way to protect yourself is to control the mosquito population. By removing standing pools of water on your property, where mosquitoes breed (old tires, plastic containers, wading pools, wheelbarrows and clogged rain gutters, change the water in bird baths weekly and put screens on rain barrels), using a mosquito repellent containing DEET, and by using common sense from dusk to dawn (when mosquitoes are most active) you can reduce the risk of contracting WNv significantly.

If you suspect that you have been bitten by an infected mosquito, seek medical attention immediately to improve your medical outcome.

For more information about WNv and your health, call Wellington?Dufferin?Guelph Public Health at 1-800-265-7293, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., connect with the health unit or visit http://wdgpublichealth.ca

By Wendy Gabrek