



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Mosquitoes aren't just annoying; they can also carry disease

Stanton- Nothing can ruin an otherwise enjoyable outdoor activity faster than relentless, pesky mosquitoes. But did you know that mosquitoes are not just annoying, they can also be dangerous?

Mosquitoes are known carriers of West Nile Virus, a disease they contract when feeding on infected birds. If a mosquito is infected with West Nile, it then passes the infection on to humans.

Most people who contract the virus have no symptoms, but those who do become ill three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms of West Nile virus can include high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, stiff neck and a severe headache. More serious complications include meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord and brain linings) and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). These diseases usually require hospitalization, can be life threatening, and even fatal.

Last year, 40 Michiganders were diagnosed with West Nile virus with one death reported. At this time, there is no specific treatment for the disease, so prevention is the best defense.

One of the best ways you can protect yourself and your family is to apply an insect repellent with DEET or Picaridin (following manufacturer's directions), to everyone over six months of age. If possible, it's also a good idea to wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and socks when heading outside. It's especially important to use these precautions between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active and most likely to bite.

Additional precautions include:

- Treat clothing with repellent
- Maintain window and door screens to help keep mosquitoes out of your house.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites such as buckets, unused kiddie pools and old tires.
- Cover cribs, strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.

Additional information can be found at www.cdc.gov/westnile.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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