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Avoid mosquitoes and West Nile Virus

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Michiganders spend a lot of time outdoors this time of year, enjoying a variety of summer activities, from biking and hiking to barbequing and relaxing at the beach. We often enjoy these activities with friends and family, but we should be prepared for uninvited guests.... pesky mosquitoes.

While mosquitoes are certainly annoying, it's important to keep in mind that they can also be dangerous. Mosquitoes are known carriers of West Nile Virus (WNV), a disease that is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird.

Most people who contract WNV have no symptoms, but some may 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.

One of the best ways you can protect yourself and your family is to use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered repellent containing DEET or Picaridin (following manufacturer's directions). Use of repellent is especially important between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active and most likely to bite. Be sure not to use repellent on children under two months old. Instead, dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs and cover the crib, stroller and baby carrier with mosquito netting.

Additional precautions include:

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and socks when heading outside.
- Treat clothing with repellent.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens and repair those with tears or openings.
- Empty water once a week from mosquito breeding sites such as bird baths, buckets, unused wading pools and old tires.

Additional information can be found at www.cdc.gov/westnile. Visit <https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases> for information about current WNV activity in Michigan, including a summary of where WNV infection has been detected in mosquitoes, animals and people.

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

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes

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