

West Nile Virus

Mosquito Repellants and Personal Protective Measures



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus carried by mosquitoes that can cause illness in humans. While most people who become infected with WNV do not get sick, others can develop more serious, and in some cases, life threatening complications.

Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. If you are outside in the evening or early morning, or are in a woody, shaded or swampy area, try to minimize your exposure to bites. There are a number of steps that can be taken to “Fight the Bite” and minimize exposure to WNV. These include wearing protective clothing and using an insect repellent containing DEET, Icaridin or other ingredients approved by Health Canada.

Protective Clothing

- Wear loose fitting long sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and a hat.
- Tuck pants into socks and button shirt cuffs for extra protection.
- Wear light-coloured clothing. Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours.
- Wear clothing made of tightly woven fabric that keeps mosquitoes away from the skin.
- Use mosquito netting when in an unscreened structure, or when sleeping outdoors.

Use an insect repellent.

In addition to wearing protective clothing, use an insect repellent containing DEET, Icaridin or other approved ingredients.

Important Insect Repellent Reminders

- Prior to using an insect repellent, read and follow the manufacturer’s directions carefully.
- Use only insect repellents labeled for use on humans. Never use anything labeled ‘insecticide’ on your body.
- Remember to use the lowest concentration needed for the time spent outside and never use DEET or Icaridin on children under six months of age. This information is on the product label. Apply insect repellent only on exposed skin or clothing. Do not apply under clothing.
- Do not apply insect repellent on open wounds, irritated or sunburned skin, or near your eyes or mouth. Apply sparingly around the ears. If repellent is accidentally applied to the eyes or mouth, rinse with water right away.
- Do not apply insect repellent to children’s hands or faces. To apply repellent, place on your own hands and then apply on the child. Do not allow children to handle the insect repellent.
- Do not spray insect repellent in enclosed areas or near food.
- Wash skin with soap and water when protection is no longer needed.

DEET Application Chart

| Age Group | Suggested % of DEET | Recommended Number of Applications Per Day |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Newborn to 6 months | DEET is not recommended for this age group. Use netting or limit time outdoors at dusk and dawn to prevent mosquito bites. | |
| 6 months to 2 years | 10% or less | Not more than 1 (do not apply to hands or face) |
| 2 years to 12 years | 10% or less | Not more than 3 |
| >12 years | Up to 30% | Follow instructions on label |

Source: Health Canada, Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

There is no evidence that the use of DEET by pregnant or breast-feeding women poses a health risk to unborn or nursing children. However, as a safety precaution these women may consider using non-chemical methods to prevent mosquito bites.

Special Notifications

If you suspect that you have a reaction to an insect repellent, stop using the product immediately, wash treated skin, and seek medical attention. Bring a sample of the product container with you to the medical appointment.

Icaridin is considered the repellent of choice by the Public Health Agency of Canada for children six months to 12 years of age. Children in this age group can use products containing up to 20 per cent icaridin; whereas products containing 10 per cent DEET is the recommended maximum for children in the same age group.

Repellants containing natural ingredients can cause allergic reactions in some people, especially young children. Follow product use directions carefully.

Other ingredients approved by Health Canada for insect repellents include: citronella, lavender, and a eucalyptus plant compound.

Additional Insect Repellent Information

When applying both sunscreen and insect repellent, first apply the sunscreen and allow it to absorb into the skin for 30 minutes before applying the insect repellent.

Store insect repellents following the manufacturer's instructions. Aerosol cans may explode if left in a hot vehicle. Consider using a pump spray or a towelette as a safe alternative.

Questions or concerns?

Talk to a Public Health Inspector at 519-575-4400 ext 5147.

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