

## Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites

Mosquitos may bite at any time of day, but most mosquitos in Nova Scotia are most active at dawn and dusk.

When mosquitos are active:

- Limit your time outdoors.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks to reduce the amount of skin for mosquitos to bite. Light coloured clothing is less likely to attract mosquitos.
- Use insect repellents that contain DEET or Icaridin. Always read the entire label carefully before using. Do not use DEET or Icaridin on babies under 6 months of age.

It's also helpful to keep mosquitos out of your home.

- Make sure that your door and window screens fit tightly and have no holes.
- Keep unscreened doors and windows closed.

## For more information

To learn more about West Nile virus, visit the Department of Health and Wellness website at [novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/west-nile-virus.asp](http://novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/west-nile-virus.asp), or contact your local Public Health Office:

Amherst . . . . .	667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish . . . . .	867-4500 Ext 4800
Bridgewater . . . . .	543-0850
Dartmouth . . . . .	481-5800
New Glasgow . . . . .	752-5151
Sydney . . . . .	563-2400
Truro . . . . .	893-5820
Wolfville . . . . .	542-6310
Yarmouth . . . . .	742-7141

For information related to pesticides or mosquito habitat, call the Department of Environment at 1-877-9-ENVIRO.

For information on blood and West Nile virus visit the Canadian Blood Services website at [blood.ca](http://blood.ca).

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Enjoy the outdoors safely

# West Nile Virus



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## What is West Nile virus (WNV)?

West Nile virus is a virus that causes an infection.

## How is West Nile virus spread?

West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of a mosquito that carries the virus. Only certain types of mosquitos can spread the virus.

In addition to mosquito bites, there is a very low risk of getting West Nile virus through blood transfusions and organ or tissue transplants.

There is no evidence that you can get the virus from contact with an infected person—for example, through touching or kissing an infected person.

## What are the symptoms of a West Nile virus infection?

Symptoms of West Nile virus vary:

- Most people have no symptoms at all.
- Among those who develop symptoms, most have mild symptoms. These can begin 3 to 14 days after a bite from a mosquito that carries the virus. Symptoms can include: fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, joint pain, swollen glands, and rash.
- A few people infected with the virus will develop serious health problems. These include infection of the spinal cord (meningitis) and/or infection of the brain (encephalitis).

## Who is most likely to get sick after being infected with West Nile virus?

Anyone can get West Nile virus, but people with weakened immune systems and people with chronic diseases are at greater risk for serious health effects like meningitis and encephalitis.

The risk of serious illness also increases with age.

## What are the chances that I could be infected?

The risks of being bitten by a mosquito that carries the West Nile virus are low. The chances of becoming seriously ill as a result are even lower.

However, anyone who is exposed to mosquitos in an area where West Nile virus has been found in mosquitos, horses or dead birds may be at risk for infection. If the virus is active in your area, it is important to avoid mosquito bites.

In most parts of Canada, including Nova Scotia, the risk of being bitten by a mosquito that carries the virus is greatest from July until early September.

## What can I do to protect myself and my family from West Nile virus?

Get rid of standing water—where mosquitos breed

- **Twice a week**, remove standing water from pool covers, saucers under flowerpots, recycling bins, garbage cans, etc. Change the water in wading pools and livestock watering tanks.
- **Once a week**, change the water in birdbaths.
- Empty and refill pet bowls often.
- Cover rain barrels with screens.
- Remove old or unused items that tend to collect water—like tires—from your yard.
- Clean out eavestroughs regularly to prevent clogs that can trap water.

Manage plants around your home—where mosquitos shelter

- Cut back tall grasses, shrubs and bushes, especially in shaded areas.