



WEST NILE VIRUS

Information for Children Attending Camps, Schools and Day Cares

Anyone can become infected with West Nile Virus (WNV) if bitten by an infected mosquito. West Nile Virus does not pose a higher risk of severe illness for children. However, children require adults to help them take precautions against mosquito bites. The same precautions apply to children in school settings as in home settings.

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne infection that was first isolated in Africa in 1937. The virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by biting an infected bird.

Is my child at risk for becoming infected with West Nile Virus while attending school?

The mosquitoes that most commonly carry WNV are generally more active during the early evening and early morning so children who attend school during the daytime are at minimal risk for exposure. As a precaution, however, schools, camps and day cares can protect children by removing breeding areas for mosquitoes and taking other precautions against mosquito bites.

Can children go on outdoor field trips and play outdoors during the summer?

The most common mosquito to carry the virus is not generally active during the daytime. Children who go on trips during the daytime are at minimal risk for exposure. If the field trip is to an area where there is heavy tree cover or vegetation, is known for high mosquito activity, or if the trip is between dusk and dawn, children should be advised to take precautions against mosquito bites.

What precautions can be taken against mosquito bites?

Wear tightly woven, lightweight and light-coloured clothing, including long sleeved shirts or hooded jackets or a hat, long pants and socks. Pant legs can be tucked into socks for extra protection. Check windows and screens for holes that may allow mosquitoes inside. Avoid areas with large numbers of mosquitoes and consider keeping children indoors from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

What are the guidelines for using insect repellent on children?

Insect repellents are only one method of reducing mosquito bites and should be part of an overall protection plan that includes avoiding areas with large numbers of mosquitoes, staying indoors from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active, and wearing protective clothing. Consider using an insect repellent for children if they must be outdoors between dusk and dawn, or if they are in an area with visible mosquitoes.

There is a wide selection of insect repellents registered in Canada. Prior to purchasing a repellent read the label instructions carefully and select a product that meets the needs of both you and your family. Some products are not recommended for children. For further information of insect repellents registered for sale in Canada visit the Federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency at www.pmr-arla.gc.ca or ask your doctor.

How do I safely use insect repellents?

Children require adult assistance to apply insect repellent. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's directions and follow these guidelines to ensure safe application:

- Do not allow young children to apply products themselves.
- Do not apply insect repellent products directly to children. Apply to your hands and then put it on the child's skin, avoiding the eyes, mouth, palms of hands, cuts or irritations. It is best to use liquid or cream insect repellents that can be applied by hand. Wash your hands after applying the product.
- If the child is attending summer camp, ensure he or she knows how to use the products properly.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly on exposed skin and on the outside of clothing. There is no need to apply to skin under clothing.
- Wash treated skin with soap and water when returning indoors or when protection is no longer needed.
- Store insect repellent out of reach of children.

What should I do if my child accidentally swallows an insect repellent?

- Call a poison control centre immediately and seek medical attention.
- Take the insect repellent container with you to the emergency facility or physician.
- Follow the first aid statements on the label.

If a child is bitten by a mosquito should he or she be tested for West Nile Virus?

No. Most mosquitoes are not infected with WNV. Even in areas where mosquitoes do carry the virus, very few mosquitoes are infected. The chances that any one bite will be from an infected mosquito are small.

If a child is bitten by an infected mosquito, will he or she get sick?

Most people, including children, who are bitten by mosquitoes carrying the WNV, may experience no symptoms or a mild illness. Parents or caregivers should contact a doctor immediately if a child develops symptoms such as high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, severe headaches, stiff neck, or if his or her eyes become sensitive to light.

Where can I find more information about West Nile Virus?

For more information about WNV and the Region of Peel's Vector-Borne Disease Prevention Plan, call

905-799-7700

**from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday
Caledon residents call toll-free at 905-584-2216.**

peel-bugbite.ca