



NEWS

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Tips To Avoid West Nile Virus

Norristown, PA (July 18, 2013) – The summer is a great time to be outside with family and friends. There is, however, one uninvited guest who can ruin any outdoor gathering – the mosquito. These flying annoyances can cause illness which, in the worst cases, can be deadly. In 2012 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 5,387 human cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in the United States, including 243 deaths. Pennsylvania ranked second in the nation with a collection of 3,410 infected mosquito samples. Montgomery County accounted for 169 infected mosquito samples, the most ever collected in the county since WNV was discovered in the U.S. in 1999. Since it only takes one positive mosquito biting one unlucky individual to lead to a potentially serious case of WNV, the threat of contracting the illness should be taken seriously.

There are simple steps everyone can take to minimize mosquitoes and protect public health:

- Wear light colored, loose fitting clothing.
- Use insect repellent. Follow the label for application. Consult a doctor with questions or concerns.
- Mosquitoes need stagnant water for their eggs to develop, so dump out bird baths, kiddie pools, and anything else that holds water every three days. Mosquitoes can go through their life cycle in as little as five days when conditions are optimal. Eliminating standing water stops mosquitoes dead in their tracks.
- Drill several holes in the bottom of recycling buckets so water can drain from them. Trash containers should be covered so no rain can accumulate in them.
- Aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with fish.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs. Keep them empty and covered if not in use; drain water that collects in pool covers. A swimming pool left unmaintained for even a week can breed thousands of mosquitoes.

- Make sure roof gutters drain properly and rooftops are free of standing water. Clogged gutters will breed mosquitoes.
- For areas that cannot be managed with the above methods, there's always larvicide. Many of the big box stores, home improvement centers, landscaping outlets, and even some pet stores carry consumer products that can be safely used to kill mosquito larvae. Again, read and apply according to the label.

The Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) will be on the front lines protecting county residents from WNV. Traps will be set, mosquitoes will be tested, and complaints will be addressed. MCHD will be applying larvicides to publically owned mosquito breeding areas and performing adult treatments in areas where WNV-positive mosquito populations need to be controlled. Please visit the Health Department website to learn more about WNV and the many services the MCHD provides: <http://www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=562>.