West Nile Virus Facts

About West Nile Virus (WNV)
WNV is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the continental United States. Mosquitoes spread the virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals.

WNV Symptoms and Risks
Only about 1 in 5 people infected with WNV develop fever and other symptoms. Less than 1% of those infected will develop more severe symptoms, including encephalitis (swelling of the brain), coma or other fatal illnesses. Although anyone can get the virus, people with a compromised or undeveloped immune system and the elderly are at an increased risk. There is no vaccine to prevent or treat WNV. If you think you have been infected with WNV, please contact your health care provider.

Detecting WNV in Your Area
Harris County Public Health (HCPH) is committed to protecting the health and well-being of the community from mosquito-borne diseases. Mosquito and bird populations are monitored to detect WNV. If disease is detected in an area, the public is notified through the HCPH website, HCPH mobile app and local media outlets. Adulticiding, commonly known as “mosquito spraying”, is also conducted.

Reduce Your Risk of WNV
Protect yourself and your community by following these steps:

Reduce mosquito breeding sites around your home by emptying or removing any containers holding stagnant water (e.g., old tires, buckets, cans, blocked gutters).

When outdoors, use an EPA-registered insect repellent containing DEET (less than 30%), Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)/para-methane-diol(PMD), IR3535, or 2-undecanone. OLE/PMD should not be used on children under 3 years of age.

If possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts (preferably light-colored) when outdoors. Use netting over infant carriers, particularly during dusk and dawn.

Reporting a Dead Bird
WNV has been detected in a variety of bird species; some birds are known to get sick and die from WNV. HCPH Mosquito and Vector Control Division will pick up all testable dead birds, regardless of species, from all areas of Harris County. Contact us for information on reporting a dead bird.

Reporting a Mosquito Breeding Site
HCPH Mosquito and Vector Control Division provides inspections of public and private properties to identify mosquito breeding sources. Reducing mosquito populations can decrease the likelihood of mosquito-borne diseases.

Contact Us Today!
713.440.4800   |   hcphtx.org/mc   |   Harris County Public Health App