



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

For Immediate Release

(Pembroke, Ontario, August 13, 2024)

West Nile Virus Confirmed in Mosquitoes in Renfrew County and District

Mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus have been confirmed in the Town of Arnprior. Every year, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) monitors West Nile virus activity through 14 mosquito traps across Renfrew County and District. Mosquitoes from the traps are collected weekly and tested for West Nile virus during the summer months.

West Nile virus disease can be spread to people through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Older adults and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of severe illness. There have not been any local human cases of West Nile virus disease reported to RCDHU so far in 2024.

"RCDHU has received confirmation of mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus in Renfrew County and District," says Dr. Jason Morgenstern, Medical Officer of Health for RCDHU. "While the risk of infection is low, this is an important reminder for everyone to prevent mosquito bites and reduce breeding sites."

Cover up when outside by:

- Wearing light-coloured clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, jackets, long pants, hats, and socks, especially between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Applying Health Canada approved insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin on exposed skin. Follow label instructions for proper application.

Clean up by:

- Removing any standing water around your home, cottage, or campsite. Mosquitoes need stagnant water to lay their eggs, and even small amounts will do such as bird baths, old tires, and unused containers.
- Keeping bushes and shrubs clear of overgrowth and debris. Adult mosquitoes like to rest in dense shrubbery.
- Turning over compost piles on a regular basis.
- Making homes and businesses "bug tight" by ensuring windows and door screens fit tightly.

West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes. Four out of five people infected will not show any symptoms. Others may have symptoms of fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and vomiting. Approximately 1 in 150 people develop severe illness affecting

the brain, such as encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of severe illness include stiff neck, confusion, tremors, numbness, or sudden sensitivity to light. Older adults and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of severe illness. If you believe you are experiencing symptoms of West Nile virus infection, please contact your healthcare provider.

For more information about West Nile virus including tips on how you can protect yourself and your family , please visit the health unit website at <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/diseases>.

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