

# West Nile virus (WNV)

## Reduce Mosquito-Breeding Sites

### What is WNV?

WNV is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause illness, including in rare cases, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

WNV can be spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become carriers of the virus when they feed on infected birds. Human infections from the virus are rare and those affected usually experience only mild symptoms such as fever or headaches. The illness can be serious and inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) can occur in a small number of cases.

### What is a mosquito-breeding site?

A mosquito-breeding site is any container, depression, or area containing stagnant water for a period longer than seven days, or moisture in which mosquito eggs may be able to develop to maturity.

Mosquitoes have a four-stage life cycle: egg, larva, pupa and adult. The eggs hatch into larvae and take about seven days, depending on the temperature, to develop into adults. At the water surface, the larva changes to a pupa before emerging as an adult mosquito.

By preventing and eliminating breeding sites, adult mosquito numbers can be decreased, which can then reduce your risk of being bitten by a mosquito.

### What are some examples of mosquito-breeding sites?

Some examples of mosquito-breeding sites that may be found in your backyard include:

- ▶ Rain barrels
- ▶ Ponds
- ▶ Bird baths
- ▶ Pool covers
- ▶ Boats or canoes
- ▶ Old tires
- ▶ Lawn equipment & ornaments (ie. flower pots)

### What can I do?

To eliminate potential breeding sites:

- ▶ keep grass cut and trim shrubs and bushes;

- ▶ fill ponds with Koi or other mosquito-eating fish (do not stock ponds that have an outflow to natural water sources if stocking with non-native fish) and consult the Ministry of Natural Resources before stocking any water body;
- ▶ keep swimming pools, spas and hot tubs chlorinated and covered tightly when not in use;
- ▶ change the birdbath water weekly;
- ▶ ensure water doesn't accumulate in tires and tire swings;
- ▶ empty buckets, wheel barrows and pots;
- ▶ store small boats and canoes upside down;
- ▶ be sure boat covers do not accumulate water;
- ▶ drain or fill tree holes;
- ▶ screen or eliminate water in sump pumps;
- ▶ keep eavestroughs and rain gutters clean;
- ▶ drain plastic covers on lawn chairs and other outdoor equipment weekly

### **Where can I find more information?**

The health unit is encouraging people to reduce mosquito-breeding sites and to take personal precautions as first steps to protect themselves against WNV. For more information call *Your Health Connection* 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) or visit the following websites:

**Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit**

[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

**Health Canada**

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

**Ministry of Environment**

[www.ene.gov.on.ca/](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/)