

Caution: West Nile May Be in Our Back Yard!

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We would like to inform our WCC population about a critter that could possibly be lurking among us all. That is, a mosquito carrying the West Nile Virus. Please do not panic but rather take heed. Caution and informed information is what we need. Particularly, in light of the recent positive find at Stone Mountain State Park. Here are the answers we have found thus far to some of the most frequently asked questions.

What is West Nile Virus?

In the article, "Mosquito Control Problems," ¹West Nile is a virus that is mosquito originated. Symptoms include headache, fever, muscle aches, and often a rash. It can cause swollen glands, (in severe cases) encephalitis, which is a brain infection. Mosquitoes are the hosts that spread West Nile by biting people, birds, and animals. However, there is no proof at this time that cross contamination can occur from person to person or from contaminated animals.

Who is at risk?

Basically, everyone is at risk. According to ²Alexander County Health Department, the most susceptible times to be bitten are dusk and dawn. The article also mentioned that people who play sports could be at higher risk related to exposure. Infants and the elderly are at high risk because their immunities are either not developed or are impaired. WXII 12 News³ reported that everyone should take measures to protect themselves.

What are the latest statistics?

The Health Department reports that 70% of people who get West Nile do not even know they have it due to the flu like symptoms experienced. The symptoms are usually very mild. The article also stated, "Only 10% will require major medical attention." Another point made was that there are more deaths reported from the flu every year than West Nile.

How can we protect ourselves?

According to the Mosquito Czar, we should not limit our outdoor activities, but instead decrease our risk of being bitten. The CDC ⁴recommends

applying insect repellent containing N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET) when outdoors. Another preventative measure would be to reduce standing water in yards. Also, make sure all windows and doors have screens that are effective. Safety measures should be taken to avoid breeding grounds for mosquitoes where we work and play.

We hope this article serves to further educate us all about West Nile Virus. Our intention is to provide information that will continue to keep us all healthy.

1. http://www.mosquitoczar.com/west_nile_virus. "Mosquito Control Problems."
2. Herman, Gary. "Birds Tests Positive for West Nile Virus." The Taylorsville Times: 3 Sept. 2003.
3. <http://www.wxii12.com/health/1523141/detail.html>. "All About West Nile Virus."
4. <http://www.CDC.com>. "Fight the Bite."

