



# News Release

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## **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH REMINDS CALIFORNIANS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM MOSQUITOES THAT CARRY WEST NILE VIRUS**

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today reminded Californians to prevent West Nile virus (WNV) infections by protecting themselves from mosquito bites.

“The arrival of warm weather promotes the breeding of mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus,” Horton said. “While no predictions can be made about the severity of West Nile virus this season, Californians should take precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites by applying insect repellent and eliminating all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.”

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.

The most effective ways for individuals to prevent exposure to mosquito bites and WNV are:

- **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep the mosquitoes from biting you. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
- **DRESS** – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure.
- **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at this time. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.
- **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also indicate that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

California has one of the most comprehensive West Nile Virus surveillance and control systems in the U.S. The state deploys surveillance and detection technology to track specific areas of West Nile Virus activity and alert local agencies so they can target their mosquito control activities.

California's WNV Web site – [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) – has been updated to make it easier for the public to find the latest information on WNV activity in the state. In order to help identify WNV activity, Californians are encouraged to report all dead birds and dead tree squirrels on the Web site or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).

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