



FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

Reducing your risk of West Nile virus

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito and causes flu-like symptoms such as fever and body aches.

People with healthy immune systems usually can fight off West Nile virus naturally, although some people—like the elderly and those with weakened immune systems—can develop a more severe form that can be deadly.

Not all mosquitoes are infected with the West Nile virus, and not all infected mosquitoes pass on the virus



when they bite. However, it is still a good idea to take two simple precautions to protect yourself from mosquito bites and the virus:



Use insect repellent when outdoors

It is especially important to use repellent when mosquitoes are most likely to bite: dawn, dusk, and early evening. Apply the repellent to exposed areas of skin and, if possible, to your clothing. If you apply repellent to your clothing, it is not necessary to also apply it to the skin underneath. Avoid applying it directly to your face—spray it on your hands first and then rub it on your face.

The most effective repellents contain a chemical called DEET. In general, the more DEET, the longer the protection will last. A repellent containing 10% to 35% DEET usually provides good protection. Reapply the repellent as often as the directions indicate.

Insect repellents containing DEET can be used safely on children. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using one that contains no more than 10% DEET on children ages 2 to 12. Adults should apply the repellent to their hands first before applying it to their children. Never apply repellent to a child's hands or face. When returning indoors, wash the areas of your child's skin that were treated.

Do not apply DEET repellent to cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.

Eliminate stagnant water

This is where mosquitoes lay their eggs. Stagnant water can collect in old tires, birdbaths, and clogged gutters. Turn over plastic wading pools at the end of the day so that they dry out.

