

For Immediate Release | June 19, 2018

## Less standing water means fewer mosquito bites

The recent floods and higher water in many areas across IH have resulted in an increase in standing water and more mosquitoes hatching. There are steps you can take to reduce or eliminate standing water on your property, which will lessen the number of mosquitoes.

Some mosquitoes in Canada can spread the West Nile virus to humans. Mosquitoes spread West Nile virus from infected corvid birds (crows, ravens, magpies, and jays) to humans through mosquito bites. The risk of getting West Nile virus is highest in the warmer months, from the end of July through August.

It was first detected in B.C. in the South Okanagan during the summer of 2009. Since then, there have been five human cases, including one case in the South Okanagan last year. The virus was also detected last year in four horses in the Kootenay area, confirming the virus is present there as well. Several parts of Canada and the U.S. continue to report West Nile virus activity.

The risk of becoming seriously ill from West Nile virus infection is low for most people. However, people over the age of 50 and those with compromised immune systems are more at risk.

There are things everyone can do both at home and while travelling to reduce the risk of infection. Any activity that prevents mosquitoes from biting or breeding can help to reduce the risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus.

- **Prevent mosquito breeding around your home.** It doesn't take much time or water for mosquitoes to develop from eggs into adults. Anything that can hold water can be a mosquito breeding area. Identify and remove potential breeding areas on your property - empty saucers under flowerpots; change water in bird baths twice a week; unclog rain gutters; drain tarps, tires, and other debris where rain water may collect; and install a pump in ornamental ponds or stock them with fish. Stagnant backyard pools can be a big source of mosquitoes and should be maintained regularly to prevent mosquito growth.
- **Install screens on windows.** Screens will help prevent mosquitoes from coming indoors.
- **Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn.** This is the time of day mosquitoes that can carry the virus are most active.
- **Wear protective clothing.** If you are in an area with many mosquitoes, wear loose fitting, light coloured clothing, full-length pants, and a long-sleeved shirt.
- **Use mosquito repellent.** Apply mosquito repellent to areas of exposed skin. Check the product label for instructions on proper use. Repellents containing DEET are safe for those over six months of age when used according to the directions on the label. View the HealthLinkBC file on DEET (<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile96.stm>) for guidelines on how frequently to apply repellent. DEET-free products (such as those containing icardin, p-menthane-3, 8-diol /lemon-eucalyptus oil, or soybean oil) are also available, but may not provide as long-lasting protection.

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Interior Health works closely with the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and Canadian Blood Services to monitor West Nile virus activity. Surveillance includes screening the blood supply and reporting human and animal cases.

**For more Information:**

- Interior Health – Mosquitoes and West Nile virus: <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/Pages/Mosquitos.aspx>
- HealthLinkBC - Insect Repellent and DEET: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile96.stm>
- BC Centre for Disease Control - West Nile virus information: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/west-nile-virus-wnv>

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