

## **FACTS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV)**

### **What is WNV?**

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord). It is likely that the virus was introduced in the U.S. by an imported, infected bird, an infected human returning from a country where the virus is common, or by a mosquito hitchhiking on an airplane.

### **How is WNV transmitted?**

When a mosquito bites a bird that carries the virus, the mosquito becomes infected. It is believed that people cannot get West Nile Virus directly from another person, or animal, that has the disease; the disease is only transmitted by mosquitoes.

### **If I live in an area where birds or mosquitoes with WNV have been reported and a mosquito bites me, am I likely to get sick?**

No. Even in areas where the virus is circulating, very few mosquitoes are infected with the virus. Even if the mosquito is infected, less than 1% of people who are bitten and infected will become severely ill. The chances you will become severely ill from one bite are extremely small. WNV incubation period in humans is 5 to 15 days.

### **What can I do to reduce my risk of becoming infected?**

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks when you are outside, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Wear light-colored clothing.
- Spray clothing with repellents containing picaridin or 10% DEET.
- Parents should not apply DEET directly to children. Apply it to your hands and then spread it on your child. Do not use DEET on infants or pregnant women.
- Apply repellent to exposed skin.
- Remember that Vitamin B, ultrasonic devices, incense and bug zappers have not been shown to be effective in preventing mosquito bites.

References: Ohio Department of Health

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/F1F6C85B0BB44590A39299A28F85A3DE/Mosquito.pdf>  
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/851C890AB2104D1D87BD62D00172FF08/wnvpeople.pdf>

Updated: February, 2010