



### West Nile Virus. What is it and how does it spread?

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus common throughout Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Since 1999, when the virus first appeared in the United States, it has spread from New York to California. Female mosquitoes spread the virus by biting infected birds, horses, other animals, and humans. In many areas of the U.S., people have become seriously ill from the bite of a carrier mosquito. No human vaccine or specific medication is available.



### Who is considered to be “at risk?”

Although health officials report that less than 1% of bites from infected

mosquitoes will cause disease, certain people can be more susceptible to the virus. These include:

- People over 50 years of age
- Those persons that have a lowered immune system.
- Organ transplant recipients and others who may be taking certain medications or recovering from surgery



Most victims of West Nile Virus experience mild symptoms. However, in severe cases, encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain) and meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) have been reported.

### Protect yourself when you are outdoors.

- Wear long sleeves and long pants, preferably light colors that allow you to see a mosquito before it bites you.
- Remember that these insects are most active at dawn and dusk so be sure to protect yourself when you are outside during these times.
- Check your window and door screens to make sure they are in good repair and fit tightly to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home or apartment.
- Discourage mosquito breeding by emptying flowerpots, wheelbarrows, buckets, etc. that may hold water. Even containers with less than ½ inch of water can provide a suitable place for a female to lay her eggs.
- If you suspect that you have been bitten by a carrier mosquito and are experiencing fever, body aches, severe headaches or are disoriented, contact your health care provider.
- Note: Insect repellents containing DEET (diethyltoliamide) are the most effective in keeping mosquitoes away for several hours. Consult your health care provider before applying this product and follow instructions carefully. Do not apply products containing DEET to children under the age of two, or to small children's hands.

### Keep Informed.

Visit the County of San Diego's official West Nile Virus website at "www.SDFightTheBite.com" to learn more about this health issue and how to protect yourself and your family or call 858.694.2888.

