



# News Release

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**Department of Health urges public to take steps now to fight West Nile virus**  
*Warmer temperatures bring mosquito season back to Washington*

**OLYMPIA** — Warmer weather in spring and summer means mosquito season in Washington. Some of those mosquitoes may be carrying the West Nile virus (WNV), so the Washington State Department of Health is urging the public to take steps now to prevent exposure. Effective steps include eliminating mosquito breeding areas around the home and avoiding mosquito bites.

“We were fortunate last year,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “There have been no human cases of West Nile virus infection acquired in our state; however, we expect the virus to show up here and people should be prepared to protect themselves.”

West Nile virus is spread to birds, horses and humans by infected mosquitoes. One of the best ways you can protect yourself and your family against West Nile virus is to avoid mosquito bites. If possible, limit your time outdoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. When going outdoors, wear lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs and use mosquito repellent. Repellents that contain DEET are the most effective. Be sure to follow the instructions on the label.

Containers around the home that catch and hold water provide prime breeding habitat for many mosquito species. Remove standing water in cans, bottles, buckets, old tires, drums and other containers. Change water at least twice a week in flower vases, birdbaths, planters, and animal watering pans. It also helps to repair leaky pipes and outside faucets, and make sure rain gutters are clean and working properly. Make sure door and window screens are in good shape—without holes and properly in place—so they close securely and keep mosquitoes at bay.

Very few people who are bitten by an infected mosquito ever get sick or require treatment; most will not have any symptoms. About one-in-five will have mild flu-like symptoms, such as headache, fever and body aches that may last for a week or two. Some people may have more

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Mosquito season is coming

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serious symptoms. In rare cases, severe symptoms develop, such as high fever, neck stiffness and inflammation of the brain.

The Department of Health is working closely with local health departments to prepare for West Nile virus. Statewide monitoring for the presence of the virus will resume later this spring including selective testing of dead birds and mosquitoes.

More information including regular updates of any reported cases in birds, horses and humans is available on the Department of Health [West Nile virus Web site](http://www.doh.wa.gov/WNV) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/WNV>). This site also contains links to the other state agencies involved in WNV and mosquito control, such as the Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, and Fish and Wildlife, as well as links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a *healthy dose of information*.

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