



West Nile Virus

Information for Children Attending Camps, Schools, and Day Care

Dear Parents:

As summer approaches, so does the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. Now, that the West Nile Virus (WNV) has arrived in Oregon, getting a mosquito bite can be cause for concern. Most people who acquire the West Nile Virus never develop any symptoms of disease. As with many illnesses, young children and the elderly are most at risk. There are some steps that can be taken around your home to decrease mosquito breeding as well as personal protective measures that can minimize the risk of being bitten. The following information should answer some of your questions regarding the virus and what you can do to protect yourself and your children this summer.

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is carried by mosquitoes and can infect humans, horses, and birds. Humans can only get the virus from the bite of an infected mosquito; the disease does not spread from other animals to humans, or from person to person.

Is my child at risk for becoming infected with West Nile Virus while attending school?

The mosquitoes that most commonly carry the WNV are generally more active during the early evening and early morning so children who attend school during the daytime are at minimal risk for exposure.

Can children go on outdoor field trips and play outdoors during the summer?

The most common mosquito to carry the virus is generally not active during the daytime. If children are playing or taking a field trip to an area where there is heavy tree cover or vegetation, or is known for high mosquito activity, or if the trip is between dusk and dawn, children should be assisted to take precautions which include wearing protective clothing and applying an effective insect repellent.

What precautions can be taken against mosquito bites?

Wear tightly woven, lightweight, and light-colored clothing, including long sleeved shirts or hooded jackets or a hat, long pants and socks. Check windows and screens for holes that may allow mosquitoes inside. Avoid areas with large numbers of mosquitoes and consider keeping children indoors from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

What are the guidelines for using insect repellent on children?

Insect repellents are only one method of reducing mosquito bites and should be part of an overall protection plan that includes avoiding areas with large numbers of mosquitoes, staying indoors from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active, and wearing protective clothing. Consider using insect repellent for children if they must be outdoors between dusk and dawn, or if they are in an area with visible mosquitoes.

- ✓ **For children under 2 years of age, DO NOT use repellent.** Use mosquito netting or additional clothing to protect infants.
- ✓ Repellents used on children 2-12 years of age should contain no more than 10% DEET, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ✓ Do not apply DEET directly to children. Apply to your own hands and then put it on the child. Avoid applying on the child's lips, hands and eyes.
- ✓ Do not allow children to apply DEET themselves.
- ✓ Wash treated skin and clothing after returning indoors.
- ✓ Store all repellents out of the reach of children.
- ✓ If you believe you or a child is having a reaction to a repellent containing DEET, wash the treated area immediately and contact your health care provider or the Poison Center (1-800-222-1222).

Insect repellents that contain 10% DEET will provide approximately 3 hours of protection while 5% DEET will provide approximately 2 hours. Remember, the maximum application guidelines for children:

- ✓ 2 yrs and under – **DO NOT** use DEET
- ✓ Ages two to 12 – maximum of 3 applications per day

What are the guidelines for using both sunscreen and DEET at the same time?

The best strategy is to apply sunscreen 20 minutes before outdoor activities and then apply insect repellent after the 20 minute period. If combination sunscreen and DEET products are used, they should be used *solely as an insect repellent*. Combination products have incompatible instructions for application, as insect repellents should be applied sparingly and sunscreens should be applied liberally for maximum protection.

What should I do if my child accidentally swallows an insect repellent containing DEET?

- ✓ Call the poison control center immediately (*1-800-222-1222*)
- ✓ Take the insect repellent container with you to the emergency room or physician
- ✓ Follow the first aid statements on the label

If a child is bitten by a mosquito should he or she be tested for West Nile Virus?

No. Most mosquitoes are not infected with West Nile Virus. Even in areas where mosquitoes do carry the virus, very few mosquitoes are infected. The chances that any one bite will be from an infected mosquito are small.

If an infected mosquito bites a child, will he or she get sick?

Most people, including children, who are bitten by mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus, may experience no symptoms or a mild illness. Parents or caregivers should contact their doctor immediately if a child develops symptoms such as:

- ✓ High fever
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Muscle weakness
- ✓ Severe headaches
- ✓ Stiff neck

Where can you find more information about West Nile Virus?

- ✓ Clatsop County Public Health Information Line @ 325-8500
- ✓ Oregon Department of Health Services @ 1-866-703-4636 www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth
- ✓ Center for Disease Control @ www.cdc.gov/westnile