



# West Nile Virus

## Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about the West Nile Virus? What questions do you have about it?

Definitions: Potential – is able to happen; possible

Central nervous system – the brain and spinal cord; contains millions of nerve cells

Permethrin – a widely used insecticide that has been classified as a carcinogen because it causes lung tumors and liver tumors in mice

## Reading

West Nile Virus is a potentially serious illness that affects the central nervous system. It can be life altering or **fatal**. West Nile Virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes carry the virus after they become infected from feeding on infected birds.

People of all ages can become ill from a single mosquito bite. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2006 there were 65 reported cases of West Nile Virus in Minnesota, 113 cases in South Dakota, 210 cases in Illinois, and 270 in California.

Fighting mosquito bites reduces your risk of getting West Nile Virus and other diseases that mosquitoes carry. Protect yourself and your loved ones; avoid bites and mosquito-proof your home.

Apply insect **repellent** to exposed skin when you go outdoors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has registered several active ingredients for use in repellents that can be applied to skin and clothing. Look for these ingredients on product labels: DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, and permethrin (use this on clothing, shoes, bed nets, camping gear, but not skin).

When you are using repellents, always follow the label instructions. Reapply the repellent if you feel mosquitoes starting to bite. Repellents containing DEET and Picaridin may be used for adults and children older than two months of age.

Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus may be used for children age three and above. Don't put repellent in children's hands because it may get into their mouths or eyes. If you choose to use permethrin, only use it on clothes or camping gear, not directly on the skin.

Covering up is another protection strategy. Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with a repellent will provide extra protection.

Is your home a breeding site for mosquitoes? Drain any standing water near your home. A small amount of standing water can be enough for a mosquito to lay her eggs. Be sure to empty water from buckets, cans, pool covers, flower pots, and other items. Throw away or cover up stored tires or items that are not being used. Also, check your rain gutters. If clogged, they will collect water. Don't forget your pets' water bowls! Clean them weekly.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Level 7.0**

## Understanding

1. What does the word **repel** mean in this reading? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Why should you drain standing water near your home? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is the West Nile Virus? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Why should we be concerned about it? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How is the illness spread? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. If a person does not like to use repellent, how could they protect themselves? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What does the word **fatal** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Which repellent should not be used on the skin? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Have you or someone you know ever had the West Nile Virus? If yes, write about it. How did you feel? What kind of treatment did you receive?

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