

Fight the Bite Newsletter

PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Fight the Bite to Prevent Lyme Disease and West Nile Virus

Insect Vectors in Philadelphia



WNV: Northern House Mosquito (*Culex pipiens*)



Lyme Disease: Deer or Black-legged Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)

Summer marks the peak of tick and mosquito season in our region. It is important to remember that these insects are disease vectors that can spread illness. Specifically, tick bites can cause Lyme disease and mosquito bites can cause West Nile Virus (WNV) infection. Both illnesses can result in long-term health problems and severe WNV illness can be fatal. Adults 50 years of age and older and those with weak immune systems are at greatest risk for severe illness from WNV. Those who work or spend a lot of time outdoors are more likely to get bitten by a tick or mosquito and possibly infected with Lyme disease or WNV.

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health encourages individuals and communities to “Fight the Bite” while enjoying the outdoors this summer. Preventing tick and mosquito bites is the best way to protect yourself and your family from Lyme disease and West Nile Virus. Read and follow the tips below to help you “Fight the Bite!”

Mosquito- and tick-proof your home and neighborhood:

- Drain or remove sources of standing water outside your home where you work and play. This helps reduce the number of places mosquitoes can lay their eggs and breed.
 - At least once or twice a week, empty water from flower pots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, cans, and any other items outside your home.
 - Remove unused tires, and other items that could collect water.
 - Empty and store kiddie pools on their side.
 - Keep your swimming pool properly filtered and chemically treated, so it stays clean.
 - Check for clogged rain gutters and clean them out.
 - Secure screens tightly on garden rain barrels.
 - Aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with fish.
 - Check for containers or trash in places that may be hard to see, such as under bushes or under your home.
 - Keep and repair screens on windows and doors. They should be well-fitted to keep mosquitoes outside.
 - Regularly mow grass, remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes.
 - Keep play areas away from shrubs, bushes, and other areas that may have ticks.
 - Place a 3-foot wide tick barrier of wood chips or gravel between wooded areas and lawns. Tick barriers can also be placed around patios and play areas.
 - Help the elderly and others in your neighborhood protect their homes from mosquitoes and ticks.
- Call the Philadelphia Department of Public Health Vector Control Program’s Mosquito Complaint hotline at 215-685-9027 to report mosquito problems in your neighborhood and dead bird sightings.

Protect yourself before heading outdoors:

- Wear insect repellent on exposed skin when outdoors. Remember to apply sunscreen first and then repellent. The insect repellent should contain one of the following ingredients:
 - **DEET (20% or higher) *Preferred repellent for preventing tick bites***
 - Picaridin
 - Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus / PMD
- *Follow label directions closely especially for children.*
- Spray clothes with repellent containing permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent. Don't apply this type of repellent to skin or under clothing. Consider keeping a set of treated clothes for outdoor activities.
 - When weather permits, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

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Avoid direct contact with ticks and mosquitoes:

- Walk in the center of trails.
- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Be aware that peak biting hours for most mosquitoes are from dusk to dawn. Take *extra* care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning, or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.

Find and remove ticks after being outdoors:

- Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within 2 hours).
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Check for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in hair.
- Remove any attached ticks as soon as possible.
- Examine gear and tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill remaining ticks.
- Check your pets, since they can bring ticks into your home. Also, discuss use of a tick preventative product for your dog with their vet.

Call your doctor if you experience fever or rash. Anyone experiencing symptoms of severe West Nile Virus, which includes fever, headache, neck stiffness, and/or disorientation, should seek medical treatment immediately.

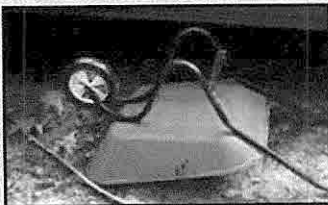
For information on selecting an insect repellent, visit:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html>

Visit the following websites for more Lyme disease and West Nile Virus prevention information.

- <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/index.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>
- <http://www.westnile.state.pa.us/>
- <http://www.phila.gov/health/diseasecontrol/FighttheBite.html>

DO THIS:



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