

# Public Health Madison & Dane County: Preventing spring mosquito bites and disease

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Madison, Wisconsin – With the arrival of spring, warmer weather and recent rain, we can expect that mosquitoes will start to become a nuisance. Their bite can do more than make you itch; they can transmit viruses like West Nile Virus (WNV), so it is important to take some preventive measures to fight the bite.

Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC) plays a role in mosquito control efforts by monitoring for disease-causing mosquitoes and working to control them.

“We monitor for the mosquito species that carry West Nile Virus,” said John Hausbeck, Environmental Health Supervisor. “The virus is transmitted to birds and people through bites from West Nile virus infected mosquitoes. As a way of gauging the likelihood of the West Nile Virus infecting humans during a particular year, we collect information on dead crows and blue jays to monitor the activity of the virus in the community. If anyone finds a sick or dead crow or blue jay, we ask that they call [1-800-433-1610](tel:18004331610) to report the bird.”

To help reduce the likelihood of mosquito transmitted diseases, PHMDC monitors mosquito populations throughout the summer and controls their breeding activity by treating water on public lands that has high numbers of the mosquito species known to carry and transmit the West Nile Virus. By treating the mosquito breeding areas, it reduces the amount of the virus circulating and causing disease.

Individuals can reduce their risk of being bitten by mosquitoes and getting infected with the West Nile Virus by protecting themselves against mosquito bites and taking measures to reduce breeding areas in their yards.

In order to prevent mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn. That's when many mosquitoes are most active.
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents, following product instructions.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items.

In order to keep mosquitoes from laying eggs in standing water:

- Once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out containers that hold water such as flower pots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, tires, birdbaths, rain barrels, and trash cans.

In addition to West Nile Virus, certain mosquitoes can also transmit the Zika Virus. "In ten years of monitoring, we have never found the types of mosquitoes that carry the Zika virus in our area," said Hausbeck, "We will continue monitor for these species this mosquito season."