



Heartland Health Region

Healthy People, Healthy Communities, and Service Excellence in an Enduring Health System



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West Nile Virus Positive Mosquitoes now Circulating in the Province

The Ministry of Health's mosquito monitoring program has confirmed the presence of mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus in Saskatchewan. This confirmation, coupled with a human case of West Nile Virus in a neighboring health region, is an important reminder to take extra precautions against mosquito bites over the next weeks.

"The *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes are circulating, are carrying the West Nile Virus, and are infecting people. It is key to protect oneself from mosquito bites to avoid getting infected with the virus", stated Dr. David Torr, Consulting Medical Health Officer for the Heartland Health Region. "There is no vaccine and no specific medication for West Nile Virus. Prevention is our best tool."

Dr. Torr suggests that individuals can reduce the risk of mosquito bites by using appropriate insect repellent, wearing protective clothing while outdoors, ensuring doors and windows are kept closed, and if open, having an intact mosquito mesh to prevent mosquitoes from coming in. It is also important to eliminate any potential breeding sites around your home, particularly bushes and stagnant pools of water. It is key to note the importance of personal precautions around dusk and dawn when *Culex tarsalis* is most active, as well as in shaded, cool areas.

Many people who do get infected with the virus will have no symptoms or will experience mild illness. However, severe illness and complications involving the nervous system, including brain inflammation, can occur. Common symptoms of West Nile Virus may include fever, headaches, and body aches. More severe symptoms can include confusion, stiff neck, paralysis, seizures and loss of consciousness. If you experience severe or persistent symptoms of this kind, it is wise to seek medical advice.

Updated surveillance results, risk maps and weekly West Nile Virus/*Culex tarsalis* reports are posted every Friday on the Ministry of Health's website at www.health.gov.sk.ca/west-nile-virus. Visitors to this site can also find a wealth of information on signs, symptoms and other preventative measures. The provincial *HealthLine Online* website also provides relevant information by visiting www.healthlineonline.ca.

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