

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, other Healthcare Providers

FROM: Dr. Deepika Lobo, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: August 8, 2023

RE: West Nile Virus in Halton

QUICK FACTS

- Adult mosquitoes in Halton have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV).
- Human WNV cases often follow 0 to 6 weeks after the first positive mosquitoes detected.
- WNV disease and other arboviruses present in Ontario such as California serogroup viruses and Eastern equine encephalitis should be considered in any patient with febrile or acute neurological illness and recent exposure to mosquitoes, blood transfusion, or organ transplantation.
- Report any suspected or confirmed cases of WNV illness to Halton Region Public Health by calling 311.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- The incubation period for WNV ranges from 2 to 14 days. While most WNV infections are asymptomatic, approximately 20 to 25% of infected individuals develop non-neurological symptoms (fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash) and less than 1% develop neuro-invasive disease.
- For diagnostic testing, acute and convalescent serology of clotted blood or serum is recommended. For neuro-invasive illness, cerebrospinal fluid testing is required.
 - The Public Health Ontario Laboratory (PHOL) [General Test Requisition form](#) should indicate “West Nile Virus - Serology” as well as onset date, symptoms, date of any significant mosquito exposures and travel history, and whether the test is for acute or convalescent serology testing.
 - For additional laboratory information see the Public Health Ontario [webpage](#).
- For diagnostic testing of other arboviruses (non-Zika), ensure that the [General Test Requisition](#) and [Arbovirus Testing Intake Form](#) are completed. See [PHOL Test Information Index](#) for more information.

KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS

- Residents can take the following steps to protect themselves and their families from mosquitoes:
 - Cover up when going outside between the hours of dusk and dawn, and at any time spent in shady, wooded areas. Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants with tightly-woven fabric.

- Reduce mosquito breeding sites around their home by getting rid of all water-filled containers and objects. Change the water in bird baths at least once per week.
 - Use an approved insect repellent, such as one containing DEET or Icaridin.
 - Make sure their window and door screens are tight and without holes, cuts or other openings.
- For current WNV surveillance data in Halton see WNV Surveillance results at halton.ca

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Public Health Ontario – Testing Information for West Nile Virus](#)
- [Health Canada – Information for Health Professionals on West Nile Virus](#)

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) (only report COVID-19 cases occurring in high-risk settings) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE PROVIDE A COPY TO ALL PHYSICIANS IN YOUR OFFICE AND/OR POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES. IF YOU HAVE ANY ISSUES WITH THIS ATTACHMENT, PLEASE EMAIL DOCTORS@HALTON.CA.