



Mosquito Control: Frequently Asked Questions

What is mosquito control, and why is it needed?

Mosquito control is the effort to protect public health by reducing mosquito populations. Mosquitoes can spread West Nile virus and other diseases.

What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus is a virus spread by mosquitoes that can affect people and animals. Mosquitoes may become infected with the virus when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to humans and other animals.

West Nile virus may cause fever, headache, fatigue or body aches. People typically recover on their own. In rare cases, the virus may cause inflammation of the brain and spinal cord.

Is there a vaccine or treatment for West Nile virus?

No. Currently there is no vaccine or treatment for West Nile virus, but in many cases, medications may be used to relieve symptoms. In severe cases, patients may need to be hospitalized to receive treatment.

If I get bitten by a mosquito, should I be treated for West Nile virus?

Not all mosquitoes carry West Nile virus. However, if you are bitten by a mosquito and have symptoms such as fever, headaches, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness or sensitivity to light, contact your doctor.

Can my pet be infected by West Nile virus?

Pets may get West Nile virus from mosquito bites, but they don't usually get sick. Contact your veterinarian if you are concerned about your pet's health. There is no evidence that dogs and cats can transmit West Nile virus to humans.

What does the City do to control mosquito populations?

The City's Health Code requires property owners to eliminate standing water, where mosquitoes easily breed, on their property. The City also regularly tests mosquitoes for West Nile virus and destroys mosquito breeding sites wherever possible. When standing water cannot be drained, the City applies treatments called larvicides that kill mosquitoes before they mature and can spread disease. (Mosquitoes that have not yet matured into adults are called *larva*.)

Does the City spray for mosquito infestation?

If mosquito surveillance and testing show that there is a threat to human health, the City may spray pesticides to kill adult mosquitoes. Spraying is conducted in high-risk areas. The City follows the [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation](#) (NYSDEC) and Federal [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) requirements when spraying and only sprays for mosquito control in the evenings or early mornings. The City does not take requests from the public for mosquito spraying.

Do the pesticides used during spraying hurt people and pets?

The City conducts spraying carefully and follows all state and federal requirements. Most people and their pets do not have health effects during and after pesticide spraying. Some people who are sensitive to spray ingredients may have short-term eye or throat irritation, or a rash. If you have stronger reactions after spraying, contact your doctor.

How will I be notified about spraying in my neighborhood?

The Health Department alerts the public of spraying at least 24 to 48 hours before the event. It notifies local media and distributes fact sheets in several languages to community-based organizations, elected officials, senior care facilities, libraries and many citywide organizations. See below for information about how to register for spraying updates.

How can I avoid exposure to pesticides during spraying?

Whenever possible, stay indoors during spraying. Remove any toys, equipment and clothes from outdoor areas. If any objects are exposed to pesticides, wash them with soap and water before using them again. *Always* wash your produce thoroughly with water before cooking or eating.

What can I do to protect myself and my family from mosquito bites and West Nile virus?

- Use insect repellents and wear long sleeves or pants in the evening during mosquito season (June through September). Mosquitoes are most active at these times. See below for more information about repellants.
- Empty standing water from containers such as flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires and birdbaths.
- Make sure backyard pools are properly maintained and chlorinated.
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors.
- Call 311 to report groups of dead birds. They may be a sign of West Nile virus in the area.

How should I choose an insect repellent?

Always read the label carefully. Look for the repellent's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration number, active ingredients and use instructions.

Active ingredients approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New York State include DEET and picaridin. DEET is the most common active ingredient proven to prevent mosquito bites. DEET-

based repellents come in a wide range of percentages, but in New York City, you do not need a repellent with more than 30% DEET. Repellents with greater than 10% DEET should **not** be used on children. Picaridin-based repellents ranging from 5 to 15% have shown similar protection times to DEET. Protection times vary for different people and depend on factors such as the species of mosquito in the area, how much a person sweats and how hot it is outside.

Are there any non-chemical, natural or botanical products that are effective in repelling mosquitoes?

Some products made with botanical oils provide protection from mosquito bites. However, studies suggest that these products work for much shorter periods of time.

If my neighbors don't take care of the standing water in their yards, should I report the issue to the Health Department?

Residents and business owners should take primary responsibility for emptying standing water from their property. If they do not, you may file a standing water complaint [online](#) or by calling 311. More information is below.

What happens after I report standing water complaints to the City?

The Health Department inspects properties for standing water. If an inspector notices conditions that attract mosquitoes, he or she will issue a violation to the property owner, which may result in fines of up to \$2,000.

Where can I get more information?

- For more information about **mosquito control** and **West Nile Virus**, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health/wnv.
- To register for updates on **mosquito spraying**, sign up for NotifyNYC, follow the Health Department on Twitter at @nycHealthy or visit nyc.gov/health/wnv.
- For more information about **mosquito repellent**, go to nyc.gov and search "insect repellent."
- To file a **standing water complaint**, go to nyc.gov and search "standing water" or call 311.