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Mosquitos aren't just annoying; they can also carry disease

Stanton- We zap them and trap them. We attempt to repel them with foggers, candles, clip ons, sprays, wipes, and bracelets; the list seems to go on and on. We even landscape with certain flowers and plants in an attempt to keep them at bay... ahh, the king of summer pests, the dreaded mosquito!

Nothing can ruin an otherwise enjoyable outdoor activity faster than relentless, pesky mosquitos. But did you know that when a mosquito bites, it can leave behind more than just an irritating, itchy red bump?

Mosquitos are not just annoying, they can also be dangerous. Mosquitoes are known carriers of West Nile Virus, a disease which is contracted while feeding on infected birds, and then passed on to humans.

According to Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), West Nile virus is a very serious disease that should not be taken lightly. While most people bitten by a WNV infected mosquito show no symptoms of illness, about one in five will experience mild illness with fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Mild cases do improve without medical treatment, but about one in 150 infected people will become severely ill with encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord and brain linings).

At this time, there is no specific treatment for WNV infection, which means that it's important to take precautions to avoid getting infected. Precautions include:

- Maintaining window and door screens to help keep mosquitoes out of buildings.
- Emptying water from mosquito breeding sites such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires, etc.
- Avoiding the outdoors at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wearing light colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors, especially at dusk and dawn.
- Applying insect repellent to exposed skin or clothing, following manufacturer's directions.

For more information on WNV and surveillance activity updates, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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