

York Region reports first human case of West Nile virus

An individual in the City of Markham has tested positive for West Nile virus, marking York Region's first human case of 2016. "Education and awareness are key to avoiding West Nile virus infection," said Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health. "Remember to cover up or stay inside during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active."

York Region encourages residents to follow these simple Fight the Bite tips to reduce their chance of being bitten by mosquitos:

? Limit outdoor activities in the early morning and early evening, when mosquitos are most active.

? Cover exposed skin by wearing long sleeves, pants and socks.

? Use insect repellent containing DEET when outdoors.

? Clean or remove standing water sources, including bird baths, empty containers, outdoor toys and flower pots.

Mosquito activity varies from year to year. While it is important to know not all mosquitos are West Nile virus carriers, two mosquito traps have tested positive for the virus this year.

York Region's annual West Nile virus control plan includes:

Mosquito control ? Mosquito populations are reduced through a process called larviciding, using provincially and federally approved pesticides.

Mosquito surveillance ? Each week between June and October up to 40 mosquito traps are set up across the Region, capturing and testing mosquitos for the virus.

Symptoms of West Nile virus may include fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, severe headaches and a sudden sensitivity to light. In rare cases, the virus can cause serious neurological illness including encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain.

For more information on West Nile virus or any other public health related issue, visit york.ca/health or contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933.