

## News Release

For Immediate Release

August 16, 2024

### **Algoma District Residents Reminded to Protect Themselves against West Nile virus**

<https://www.algomapublichealth.com/news/protect-yourself-against-west-nile-virus/>

A human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) has been confirmed in the Algoma District. This case closely followed a report of a wild bird (American Crow) in Sault Ste. Marie tested positive for WNV. These events are a reminder that WNV is present in our communities and there is an ongoing risk to residents during peak mosquito season. Algoma Public Health (APH) urges members of the community to take steps to limit their risk and to seek medical assessment if they are concerned that they may have symptoms of WNV.

Mosquitoes acquire WNV by feeding on infected birds. The virus is then spread to humans and other mammals by the bite of an infected mosquito. The last time WNV was confirmed in Algoma was in 2018 when mosquitoes taken from a trap tested positive.

APH conducts surveillance for WNV across the district annually. “Algoma Public Health traps mosquitoes throughout the summer to send them for species identification and WNV testing.” says Chris Glibota, a Public Health Inspector. “Although the risk of becoming infected with WNV is low, protecting yourself against mosquito bites can help reduce the risk even further”.

To protect yourselves from mosquito bites keep note of the following:

- Wearing light-coloured clothing, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes when outdoors
- Use insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin, and follow the directions carefully
- Avoiding the outdoors at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active
- Repairing or replacing screens on windows and doors to avoid mosquitoes entering your home
- Removing standing water from your property where mosquitoes can breed

The chances of having a severe illness are greater as you get older or if you have a weakened immune system. Most people who contract West Nile virus will not feel any symptoms. About 1 in 5 people infected may experience mild illness including fever, headache, body ache, nausea, vomiting, and rash on the chest, stomach, or back. Severe symptoms are rare and are more likely to develop in elderly residents and those with immunocompromising conditions. Severe symptoms can include muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, tremors, numbness, and sudden sensitivity to light. Symptoms usually develop between two to fifteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. If you think you may have contracted West Nile virus, contact your doctor or other health care provider.

Algoma Public Health does not accept dead birds. If you find a dead bird on your property, you can contact the [Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative](#) to learn more about their surveillance and submission programs.