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WEST NILE VIRUS SEASON IS HERE AGAIN; PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES

COLUMBUS – Spring is in the air and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reminds Ohioans now is the time to take precautions to protect themselves from mosquito-borne illnesses such as West Nile virus (WNV).

“West Nile virus is preventable when you fight the bite,” said ODH Director J. Nick Baird, M.D. “With some simple steps, you can protect yourself and your loved ones when outside this spring and summer.”

Although cases of WNV have decreased considerably since 2002 when ODH reported 441 human cases, this unpredictable virus could return at higher levels in 2006. After reporting 12 cases in 2004, ODH reported 61 cases in 2005.

To avoid possible infection from mosquito bites:

- Avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you must be outdoors, be sure to wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, shoes and socks. Light colors are least attractive to mosquitoes.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or lemon eucalyptus oil and follow the label directions; generally a concentration of 30 percent DEET for adults and 10 percent or less for children.

To eliminate mosquito breeding sites near your home:

- Remove all discarded tires and other water-holding containers such as tin cans and unused flower pots, from your property. Eliminate standing water from your property.
- Make sure all roof gutters are clean and drain properly.
- Clean and chlorinate pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs. Keep them empty when not in use and drain water from pool covers.
- Change water in bird baths weekly.

Other mosquito-transmitted diseases in Ohio include Eastern Equine encephalitis, La Crosse encephalitis and St. Louis encephalitis. People who have symptoms – including high fever, headache, muscle aches, vomiting and loss of appetite – two to 15 days after a mosquito bite should see their doctor and tell him or her about the encounter.

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