

## Rx Briefs

### A sight to behold

Visit the Science of Sight Experience at the Twelve Oaks Mall, Novi, Aug. 23-25 and experience an interactive, multi-media and educational event that demonstrates how to protect, maintain and maximize eye health and vision through early detection and prevention.

For the kids, there are colorful displays, optical illusions and other hands-on activities. Teens can test their reaction time and reflexes with interactive eye/hand and eye/foot coordination challenges. Adults will learn how regular exams can detect serious conditions, such as diabetes or even high cholesterol. Seniors will learn about health and vision issues associated with aging.

A number of noted personalities - Britney Spears, former Vice President Dan Quayle, Brooke Shields, Walter Cronkite, Jeff Garcon and others - have given a pair of their sunglasses to the Science of Sight Experience in hopes that visitors learn the critical importance of protecting their eyes from the damaging rays of the sun.

### Senior care

Northville-based Comfort Keepers offers non-medical, in-home services to seniors in Livonia, Farmington, Farmington Hills and Northville. Services include light housekeeping, meal preparation, grocery shopping, laundry, running errands and transporting to appointments. Caregivers, who are bonded and insured, are available by the hour, the day or by the week.

"We live in a very mobile society," says owner Marie Policelli. "Years ago, children usually lived near their parents. Someone was usually available to provide assistance to their elderly parents. Today, many family members live several miles away. Comfort Keepers can step in to help provide the additional assistance needed."

For more information, call (248) 249-2111 or visit [www.comfortkeepers.com](http://www.comfortkeepers.com)

### Ambassadors

The American Cancer Society recently named 10 metro Detroiters as Relay Community Ambassadors to act as grassroots volunteers and spokespersons for the society's advocacy efforts. The ambassadors will join others from around the country in representing the interests of those touched by cancer before Congress during a national event in Washington, D.C. this fall. The event, known as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life Celebration on the Hill will take place Sept. 18-19.

The ambassadors include Diane Duxer of Canton, Todd LaJoy of Canton, Paula Jo Steele of Westland, Beth Pummil of Westland, Dolores C. Kuczejka of Rochester Hills, Kathleen Leighton of Rochester, Joanne McMurray of Troy, Gina Petrak of Bloomfield Hills, Janet L. Purly of Rochester Hills, and Sue Soback of Westland. Relay for Life was held in 19 metro-Detroit communities in 2002, raising over \$1.4 million for the society's on-going programs of cancer research, education, advocacy and service.

# WEST NILE VIRUS

## Mosquito-born disease threatens summer safety



BY RENEE SKOGLUND  
STAFF WRITER

Mosquitoes have always been pesky insects, but now they carry a threat beyond an itchy welt: West Nile Virus, a disease transmitted to humans and animals by mosquitoes that have fed off of infected birds.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that 34 states, primarily on the East Coast, have recognized West Nile Virus in mosquitoes or birds. However, the line of offense moved westward the last two years and now runs from Winnipeg to Houston. In southeastern Michigan, 65 dead birds tested positive for the virus last summer. This summer, the numbers have increased considerably, with Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties among the locations reporting infected birds.

As of last week, the CDC reported 135 cases of West Nile Virus in humans in the United States. Louisiana has been hit the hardest with 85 reported cases and seven deaths.

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"We want them to maintain their regular summer activities but with cau-

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tion," she said. "Even though Louisiana is in a state of emergency, in Michigan we've had no human cases. But we are still urging our residents to minimize their risk of coming in contact with mosquitoes because West Nile Virus has been identified in southeastern Michigan and Wayne County."

Dr. Amy Seger, a Beaumont Hospital family physician who practices in Clarkston, said her patients have not expressed concern over the virus. "Even if you are exposed, less than 1 percent will get seriously ill. You have to put it into perspective."

### TRANSMISSION AND SYMPTOMS

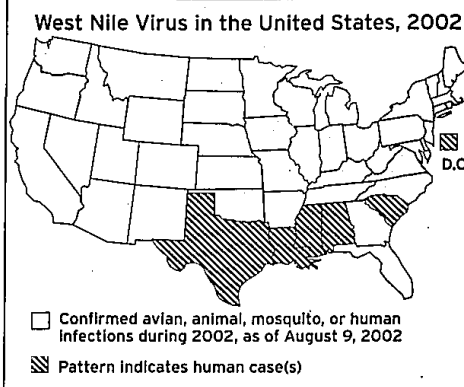
According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, mosquitoes become infected with West Nile Virus by feeding on infected birds. The positive-tested mosquitoes have been of the *Culex pipiens* species, which almost exclusively bite only birds. To date, testing on mosquito species that bit both horses and humans as well as birds has been negative.

After 10 to 14 days, a mosquito's salivary glands become infected, enabling it to transmit the virus to humans and other animals during biting. Crows are most susceptible and usually die within two to three weeks of infection; therefore, dead crows are an accurate indicator of West Nile virus within an area.

Health officials say it is rare for humans to contract the virus, even in areas where the virus has been reported. In a recent telebriefing with media members throughout the country, Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said:

"It's very important to appreciate that of the people who are actually known to become infected with the virus as we detect it through antibody testing, only about one in five of those infected people will have any clinical sign of the illness at all, or any fever, or any awareness that they've been bit, and only one in 150 infected people will develop the more serious complications."

While most people infected with West Nile Virus have no symptoms, some may become ill three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, about one in four infected persons will develop a mild illness



with symptoms that include fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes a skin rash and swollen lymph glands.

A more severe infection - West Nile encephalitis - is marked by headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis.

West Nile Virus primarily targets those over 50 and those with a compromised immune system, said Seger. It is important to note, she added, that symptoms of the virus develop quite rapidly after the incubation period and that symptoms of a more severe case are "the same things you see with meningitis."

### TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Although there are efforts to develop a vaccine for West Nile Virus, at present there is no cure, said Seger. "It's more about supportive care."

Such care, if needed, includes hospitalization, intravenous fluids, airway management, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections. Avoiding the virus requires vigilance. You are most at risk from April to October, when mosquitoes are most active. To reduce your risk, the Michigan Department of Community Health (in their publication *What is West Nile Virus?*) recommends the following:

- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting, well-maintained screens.
- Drain all standing water in the yard. Empty flower pots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pools, birdbaths, tires, discarded tires, children's toys, etc.

- Remind or help neighbors to eliminate breeding sites on their property.

- If outside between dusk and dawn (active mosquito period), wear protective clothing, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and socks.

- Regarding the use of the insect repellent DEET, Seger recommends:

- Read the label for the concentration levels. Products can contain 4 to 100 percent of DEET. "An effective repellent will contain 35 percent DEET. Anything in a higher concentration will not provide any additional coverage," she said.
- Make sure repellent is EPA-approved.

- Do not spray repellent near food. Avoid breathing in sprays.

- Apply DEET sparingly. Insect repellents are not sunscreens.
- Avoid applying DEET to eye and mouth areas, and do not put it on children's hands. Children tend to rub their eyes or put their hands into their mouths.

- Do not apply DEET to areas of irritation or abrasion. This will result in more absorption.
- Do not use on children under 2 years old.

- Thoroughly bathe or wash off insect repellent after coming indoors for the night.

Seger also warned against using vitamin B or any nutritional device to ward off mosquito bites. "These are not effective," she said. Rather, reducing the risk of West Nile Virus is a matter of "repellents and common sense."

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## Disposing of dead crows

The Wayne County Department of Health is no longer collecting dead crows. It is not necessary to confirm the presence of West Nile Virus in an area, said spokeswoman Sandra Collins. "Residents can call us to report a dead crow, but we will no longer send an environmentalist out to collect it."

"To dispose of a dead crow, Collins recommends:

- Using disposable gloves to pick up the bird
- Double-bagging the bird in plastic
- Placing it in a trash receptacle
- Disinfecting any tools, such as a shovel, used to pick up the bird with a bleach-water solution (1 cupful of bleach to 1 gallon of water)
- Keeping children away from dead crows

## Breast-feeding Awareness Month puts focus on dad

The arrival of a new baby is an exciting time for parents, but sometimes fathers experience feelings of jealousy and alienation because of the nursing mother's close relationship with her baby.

"Some men object to breast-feeding because of the intimacy issue, and some feel embarrassed when their wives or girlfriends expose their breasts during times of nursing," says Nathaniel McNeal, the proud father of a 5-month-old breast-fed son. "Men have little knowledge about the importance of breast-feeding, but when you educate dads of the health benefits and the financial savings, they support breast-feeding because they want the best for their children."

During August, World Breast-Feeding Awareness Month, the Wayne County Department of Public Health is working to help fathers understand that breast-feeding is vital to the mother and child's well-being.

"It is important that fathers



Nathaniel McNeal looks on while his wife, Gerry Lynn McNeal breastfeeds their five-month-old son, Nathaniel, Jr.

realize that breast-feeding is one of the most valuable gifts a mother can give her baby," says Deborah Wendt, Nutrition Program director for Wayne County Department of Public Health. "The benefits of breast-feeding primarily include convenience, improved bonding, economic advantages and improved health."

### ADVANTAGES

Studies have shown that breast milk is perfectly suited to nourish infants. Human milk provides the optimal mix of nutrients and antibodies necessary for baby to thrive. Breast-fed babies are protected from illnesses such as ear infections, diarrhea, rashes and allergies.

Moreover, breast-fed infants have fewer rates of hospitalizations, and less chance of developing heart disease, juvenile diabetes and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Also, cognitive development scores are improved in breast-fed children.

"There are health benefits for moms who breast-feed as well," says Diane Moore, Wayne County Women-Infants-Children (WIC) Program and Breast-Feeding Coordinator for Wayne County Department of Public Health. "Mothers who breast-feed are at decreased risk for developing breast and ovarian cancers, and osteoporosis."

The county's WIC program recommends that babies be breast-fed to at least 6 to 12 months. However, some women may experience discomfort during the first few weeks of breast-feeding. A woman's nipples may become sore or cracked. She may experience engorgement when breasts become full of milk.

### TIPS FOR DADS

The best way for dads to avoid feelings of jealousy or being left out is to become an active participant in the baby's life. A new father can:

- Bring the baby to the mother when it's time to nurse
- Sing, rock, cuddle and burp the baby
- Change diapers and give baby a bath
- Get your partner something to drink while she is nursing
- Take over childcare between nursings so the mother can get some rest
- Share in household chores
- Support mother's decision when relatives and friends disapprove or are uninformed about breast-feeding

PLEASE SEE DAD, C7