

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS

2005

The Presidio Trust is working in cooperation with regional agencies to prepare for West Nile virus, which has now been detected in the Bay Area. This brochure provides information about West Nile, and suggests simple precautions.

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus appeared in the eastern United States in 1999, and has now been detected in all 48 continental states. West Nile arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2004. Experts anticipate a significant increase in the presence of West Nile virus here in 2005.

West Nile virus is transmitted by mosquitoes and spread by migrating birds. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds, and can transmit the virus to humans and animals. Not all mosquito species are disease carriers. While the potential carrier mosquitoes are common in the Bay Area, they are not the most common mosquito type found at the Presidio.

Development of disease symptoms in humans is rare. Approximately 80 percent of people who become infected with the virus will not show any symptoms and will not even know they are infected. Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected will display flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache, body aches, and nausea. Less than 1 percent of people who become infected will get severely ill. People over the age of 50 are more likely to develop serious symptoms, and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

What Can You Do?

Help prevent mosquitoes from breeding and decrease the chance of mosquito bites:

- Mosquito larvae need standing water to survive. Even a bottle-cap of water can act as a breeding spot. Drain all standing water around your building, including in plant saucers, furniture covers, wading pools, and trash/recycling containers. Repeat frequently throughout the spring and summer.
 - Let the soil dry on the surface of outdoor plants before watering.
 - When outside for extended periods (especially dusk), wear socks, long sleeve shirts, and long pants, and use insect repellent with DEET.
 - Keep outside lighting to a minimum near entry doors, as some mosquitoes are attracted to light.
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What is the Presidio Trust Doing?

Reducing Mosquitoes – Presidio Trust is using traps at more than two dozen sites to detect if carrier mosquitoes are present. We are eliminating breeding spots by removing standing water, including in storm drains, eroded areas, trash containers, etc. When an area cannot be drained or graded, biological insecticide is used to kill mosquito larvae. Biological insecticide is not toxic to humans, birds, fish, or other mammals.

Screens – The Presidio Trust has provided windows screens for all park homes. If a screen is missing or broken, or if you need assistance with installation, please contact the Presidio Trust at (415) 561-4270.

Working Together – The Trust is working with regional agencies on a coordinated response to West Nile virus, and will provide updated information to residents, employees, and visitors as needed.

Habitat Restoration – Healthy ecosystems support a variety of species, including those that prey on mosquitoes. The Trust and its partners are engaged in habitat restoration projects throughout the park, improving the health and vitality of natural areas. This approach has enjoyed significant success in controlling mosquitoes in other areas.

Report a Sighting

If you see a dead bird, please report the location to the Presidio Trust Work Order Desk at (415) 561-4273. Reports help public health experts better monitor West Nile virus.

Questions?

Presidio Trust Public Affairs Office
(415) 561-5418 / presidio@presidiotrust.gov



**34 Graham Street
PO Box 29052
San Francisco
California 94129-0052**