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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS

The Presidio Trust is working in cooperation with regional agencies to prepare for West Nile virus. Public health officials believe that mosquitoes bearing West Nile virus are likely to be detected in Northern California this year. This brochure provides information about West Nile, and suggests simple precautions.

## WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus first appeared in the eastern United States in 1999, and has since been detected through most of the country. To date (April 2004), no infected birds have been reported and no human infections have been contracted in Northern California. There have been three human cases of the disease in Southern California.

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 carriers of the disease. While the potential carrier mosquitoes are common in the Bay Area, only small numbers have been found at the Presidio (less than 1 percent of all mosquitoes identified in traps in 2004).

Development of disease symptoms in humans is rare. Approximately 80 percent of people who have been 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 mild 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 IS THE PRESIDIO TRUST DOING?

**Mosquito Abatement and Monitoring** – The Presidio Trust is closely monitoring the mosquito population so that the measures we take are most effective. We are eliminating conditions that favor breeding by removing sources of standing water, such as water in storm drain catch basins, eroded areas, trash containers, etc. When an area cannot be drained or graded, biological insecticide is being used to kill mosquito larvae. Biological insecticide is targeted and effective, and is not toxic to humans, birds, fish, or other mammals.

**Screening** – The Presidio Trust is installing window screens in all park homes and apartments.

**Coordination and Public Education** – 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.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Mosquito larvae need standing water to survive. Even a bottle-cap of water can act as a mosquito breeding spot. Eliminating such breeding spots can help control mosquitoes around your home or workplace. The following suggestions will help prevent mosquitoes from breeding and will decrease the chances of mosquito bites:

- Drain all standing water that may collect around your building, such as saucers below flower pots, furniture covers, wading pools, and trash/recycling containers. Repeat frequently throughout the spring and summer months.
- Do not over-water your outdoor plants. Let the soil dry on the surface before watering.
- Remove or dispose of containers that can collect standing water (e.g., buckets, cans, un-drained flower pots, etc.).
- When outside for extended periods, wear socks, long sleeve shirts, and long pants, and use insect repellent.
- Keep outside lighting to a minimum near entry doors, as some mosquitoes are attracted to light.

## QUESTIONS?

**Presidio Trust Public Affairs Office**  
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## 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.

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) & California Department of Health Services.*