

Seasonal Testing Of Blood Supply Can Control West Nile Virus

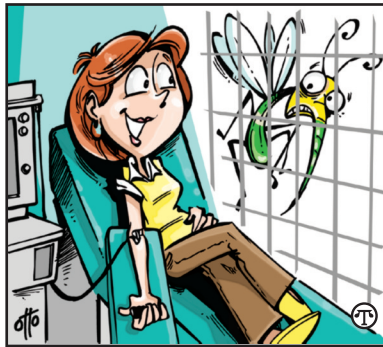
(NAPSA)—Officials predict that warmer temperatures and a wet spring could increase the number of mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus (WNV).¹ Incidence rates of this disease have been climbing, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control reported a 42 percent increase in the number of WNV cases between 2009 and 2010.^{2,3} Environmental factors moving into the 2011 season have produced ideal conditions for the virus to thrive.

How West Nile Virus Is Transmitted

WNV is transmitted from the bite of an infected mosquito. Although most people (nearly 80 percent) show no symptoms, some people experience flulike symptoms. In rare cases, WNV can cause inflammation of the brain and other potentially life-threatening complications, particularly in the elderly or those with compromised immune systems. Those who show no symptoms may not realize they are infected and may unwittingly donate infected blood, which can lead to transmission of WNV from donor to the transfusion recipient.

Protecting the Blood Supply From West Nile Virus

According to Richard Benjamin, M.D., chief medical officer at the American Red Cross, “Blood centers play an extremely important role in protecting the blood



A special test can screen donated blood for WNV, preventing contaminated blood from entering the U.S. blood supply.

supply from WNV and in early outbreak detection. We have adopted the most advanced technology available to detect WNV in donated blood and eliminate infected units of blood before they reach patients.”

In 2002, after recognizing that WNV could be transmitted through blood transfusions, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asked the health care industry to quickly develop a nucleic acid-based test (called a NAT test) that could screen donated blood for WNV. Novartis Diagnostics was the first company to receive FDA approval for a WNV NAT blood-screening test. Today, this highly sensitive NAT technology is used to screen nearly all the U.S. blood supply

for HIV type 1, hepatitis types B and C virus, and WNV.⁴ In 2010, NAT testing identified nearly 150 cases of infected blood that had been donated by people who had no symptoms of WNV—preventing this contaminated blood from entering the U.S. blood supply.³

Avoid Mosquito Bites to Avoid Infection

When dealing with WNV, prevention is your best bet. Take the commonsense steps below to reduce your risk. (Information provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)⁵

Protect Yourself

- Use insect repellent on exposed skin when you go outdoors.
- Clothing can reduce mosquito bites. When weather permits, wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.
- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many species of mosquitoes.

Mosquitoproof Your Home

- Drain standing water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Get rid of items that hold water.
- Install or repair screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having well-fitting screens on both windows and doors.

For more information about how to protect against West Nile virus, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/prevention_info.htm.

References:

1. ABC4.com. <http://www.abc4.com/content/news/state/story/Wet-spring-could-bring-more-West-Nile-Virus/ckwpuvUcyHE6557BJ8rQ7PQ.cspx>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/surv&controlCaseCount09_detailed.htm
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/surv&controlcasecount10_detailed.htm
4. CDC Fact Sheet: West Nile Virus: What You Need To Know. http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv_factsheet.htm
5. CDC. Fight the Bite Fact Sheet. http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/prevention_info.htm