

# FIGHT THE BITE!



## HOME AND GARDEN MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

West Nile virus is a disease that can be transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. The virus is carried long distances by infected birds and then spread locally by mosquitoes that bite these birds. Drought conditions may make it worse since birds and mosquitoes will share the same few watering holes, even in backyards. Mosquitoes need still water to lay their eggs, which develop in 7 to 10 days. Eliminate standing water weekly to keep many mosquitoes from breeding in the first place.

It is very rare to catch the virus, and most infected people will not even get sick or will only experience mild flu-like symptoms. However, West Nile virus can be fatal especially to people over 50 years of age. So protect yourself from mosquito bites before doing any outdoor maintenance and while enjoying outdoor activities. Visit [www.santacruzhealth.org/fightthebite](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/fightthebite) for more information.

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| Animals           | Dogs and cats can become infected, but rarely become ill and do not spread the virus. Keep animal areas dry. Keep food and water bowls clean. A vaccine is available for horses.                                  | Lawn ornaments | Should be checked for areas that hold water, and drained or flushed weekly.   |
| Birdbaths         | Clean or hose out birdbaths weekly.   | Lighting       | Check garden lights and eliminate water from tops of fixtures and from inside floodlights.  |
| BTI               | A natural bacteria that kills mosquito and fly larvae yet is non-toxic to animals when used properly. Kills larvae developing in water. (See dunks below.)  | Playgrounds    | Drill drainage holes in tire swings and playground equipment that holds water.  |
| Building material | Unused pipe should be kept inside or turned over so that no water accumulates.  | Ponds          | Stock with mosquito eating fish. Use mosquito dunks or BTI in ponds and larger bodies of water. Follow instructions for safe use.   |
| Chainlink fence   | Cover chainlink fence posts with metal or plastic caps since they are hollow pipes  | Potted plants  | Do not overwater plants. Empty saucers weekly or flush with garden hose. Drill small drainage holes in outdoor saucers.   |
| Clothing          | Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when working around mosquito infested areas.  | Pools/Spas     | Maintained pools and whirlpool spas are not a hazard since pool chemicals and filters kill any larvae. Use dunks in deserted pools and spas.  |
| Containers        | Cover containers or turn upside down so that they do not hold water including: ashtrays, boxes, buckets, cans, cups, jars and pots.   | Rainbarrels    | Cover tightly with screening.   |
| Dawn/Dusk         | The times of day that biting mosquitoes are most active since they avoid the heat of day.   | Raingutters    | Keep gutters clear of debris. They can become breeding areas with standing water.   |
| Dead birds        | Pick up dead birds with a shovel or gloves. Double bag in plastic and dispose in trash. Dead birds should not be handled directly in order to avoid exposure to the virus. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. | Recycling bins | Cut top and bottom from tin cans and flatten. Invert glass jars. Crush soft drink bottles and cans. Store newspapers on end, not flat. Drill drainage holes in bottom of recycling bin. |
| DEET              | The active ingredient in insect repellent. A 10% concentration is recommended for kids.   | Screens        | Install and maintain tight-fitting window and door screens.   |
| Drains            | Keep outdoor drains flowing freely.   | Shrubbery      | Trim and thin shrubs and bushy plants since they can be mosquito hiding areas.  |
| Dripping water    | Fix leaky faucets, air conditioners and hoses.  | Tool sheds     | Keep shed roofs maintained and eliminate water around foundation.   |
| Drought           | Drought conditions may help spread the virus since birds and mosquitoes share the same few water sources, even in yards.  | Tires          | Properly dispose of old tires. Drill drainage holes in tires used in retaining walls and in landscaping.  |
| Dumpsters         | Keep dumpsters covered, and remove any water inside and under dumpster.   | Trash cans     | Keep trash cans covered. Remove buckets and containers from around trash areas.   |
| Dunks             | Dunks are donut-sized pellets that kill mosquito larvae but are non-toxic to animals. They dissolve slowly in water. Available at hardware and garden stores. (See BTI above.)                                    | Trees          | Eliminate water from dead tree stumps and hollow areas of live trees. Fill cavities with sand and flush weekly with a hose.   |
| Flat roofs        | Inspect weekly to remove any puddles. Fix leaks from air conditioners and pipes. Keep rain gutters clear of debris and flowing freely.  | Trash          | Remove anything that can hold water including cans, cups, tin foil, plastic and paper since mosquito larvae can grow.   |
| Irrigation        | Do not overwater. Eliminate any areas of excess standing water weekly.  | Umbrellas      | Table umbrella and basketball bases often are filled with water. Cap tightly, seal with duct tape or fill with sand and cover tightly.  |
| Landscaping       | Remove plastic sheeting under bark or rock and replace with landscape fabric that prevents weeds yet allows water through.  | Weeds          | Remove weeds, especially around areas close to water.   |
|                   |   | Wheelbarrows   | Store wheelbarrows vertically or turned over to prevent water accumulation.   |