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WEST NILE AWARENESS

In the month of May the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is focusing on Environmental Health issues. First was Lyme disease, next we shift to West Nile Virus. West Nile is a virus carried by mosquito's that can cause encephalitis and meningitis. It is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. West Nile is not spread by person-to-person contact such as kissing, touching or caring for a person who is infected. However, always remember dead birds carry a variety of diseases and should never be handled with bare hands. Most people infected with the West Nile Virus have no symptoms or experience mild illness such as fever, headache and body aches. We suggest you take the following precautions from April to October to reduce your risk of becoming infected with West Nile Virus.

1. When outside wear protective clothing, such as long pants, loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and socks. Consider the use of an insect repellent containing DEET, according to manufacturer's direction on the label.
2. Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens.
3. Drain all standing water in the yard and mosquito breeding sites, such as flower pots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters and swimming pool covers on a weekly basis.
4. Remind or help neighbors eliminate mosquito breeding sites on their properties.

For more information regarding Lyme Disease or West Nile virus, you may also contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency at one of our three locations: Coldwater (517) 279-9561 ext. 106, Hillsdale (517) 437-7395 ext. 111, Three Rivers (269) 273-2161 ext. 233 or visit our website at

www.bhsj.org.