

Questions with Brief Answers - ECHO Show #9 “West Nile, Lyme and LaCrosse”

(Taping Date: Tuesday, March 29th – 3:15-7:15 at TPT)

1) This show is focusing on seasonal diseases that usually return every summer in the Midwest. What are the names of these diseases and how do we get them?

- West Nile Virus, LaCrosse and Lyme diseases return each summer because the bugs that carry them become active.
- People can get the West Nile Virus and LaCrosse from mosquitoes that may carry these diseases to humans (from mosquito bites).
- When deer ticks bite they can pass on Lyme disease to humans.
- These diseases are for the most part, preventable if people take proper care before spending time outdoors or in the woods for activities like camping.

2) What is West Nile Virus?

- West Nile Virus is a fairly new disease to the Midwest that came to the United States from Africa and southern Europe.
- West Nile Virus can make some people sick with an illness that affects the brain.
- Typically it takes 2 – 6 days for symptoms of the West Nile Virus to show up in humans. For some people, the symptoms can take up to two weeks to be discovered.

3) How will I know if I am sick from West Nile Virus?

- The risk from a mosquito bite is very low because most mosquitoes don't carry the disease and even if they do, they won't usually make you sick from the virus.
- Most people infected with the West Nile Virus won't feel sick, but some people will feel like they have the flu.
- Some people might develop more serious symptoms such as such as a sudden high fever, a severe headache, muscle aches, seizures, vomiting or a rash.
- It's very rare, (less than one percent) but it is possible for people to die from West Nile illnesses. That's why it's important to see a doctor if you feel sick after outdoor activities.

- People infected with the West Nile Virus cannot give the virus to other humans.
- The older you are the higher at risk of developing serious symptoms of West Nile simply because the body's immune system is not as strong as it used to be.

4) Why is it important to report dead birds found in yards, parks or campgrounds?

- West Nile kills birds and by testing them it's possible to monitor the West Nile virus carried by mosquitoes throughout the State.
- The State health department tests dead birds in their laboratories. This testing is usually done during the late summer and early fall when mosquitoes are most active.
- Do not touch a dead bird simply report it to your local public health department.

5) Another virus called LaCrosse is carried by Mosquitoes, tell us about this disease.

- Like West Nile, mosquitoes carry LaCrosse to humans.
- Most people infected with LaCrosse don't get sick but some will feel like they have the flu.
- In rare cases LaCrosse can cause swelling of the brain especially in children so it's good to see a doctor for treatment as soon as symptoms develop.
- People with severe cases of the LaCrosse illness will start feeling like they have the flu but over time the illness may rapidly progress into disorientation, seizures, and coma (unconsciousness).

6) Tell us about Lyme disease which is very different from the West Nile and LaCrosse viruses.

- Lyme disease is a potentially serious bacterial infection caused by a tick bite that can affect humans and animals.
- Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacteria, so not all deer ticks transmit Lyme disease.
- The tick must be attached for at least 24-48 hours to transmit the bacteria to humans.
- Deer ticks are really hard to see because they are about the size of the head of a pin. They are smaller than the more common wood ticks.

7) How can I tell if I've got Lyme disease?

- Symptoms typically show up 3 to 30 days after a bite from an infected deer tick and include a severe headache, chills, muscle and joint aches, fever and fatigue.
- Sometimes but not always, people might get rash near the tick bite. The rash has a red ring around the edges and is clear in color in the middle. It also looks like a "bull's eye" or a "target."

8) What are the treatments for Lyme disease?

- Antibiotics help get rid of the Lyme disease because they kill the bacteria.
- Treatment is most effective if caught early. Lyme disease diagnosed later may be more difficult to treat.

9) How can we prevent getting diseases from ticks and mosquitoes?

- Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeve shirts, pants, and boots when you're going to be outdoors during the summer months especially in wooded areas.
- Use bug repellants to keep ticks and mosquitoes away from your skin and check your body carefully for ticks.
- Remember to dress and check children carefully because they might not know what to prevent mosquitoes and ticks off their skin.
- Mosquitoes breed in water. Empty buckets, tires, or toys that might hold water after rainy weather.
- Stay inside when mosquitoes are most active during dusk and dawn (early morning or evening).
- If you feel sick after spending time outdoors especially in wooded or wet areas where mosquitoes and ticks might live, see a doctor for treatment and advice.