

## **Gardeners and Outdoor Lovers 50 Years of Age and Older Urged to Take Steps to Avoid West Nile Virus**

National Public Health Week is April 1-7. This year's theme is "Fight the Bite—Join the 'Swat Team' Against West Nile virus."

West Nile virus is a disease that is spread by migrating birds and mosquitoes. Although most people do not become ill, individuals 50 years of age and older can be hit particularly hard and are more likely to die from the disease.

Taking necessary precautions to prevent contracting West Nile virus is key. As part of this year's public awareness campaign, prevention tips are being provided to Coloradans by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to avoid getting the disease. The most important tip is to limit outside activity around dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are actively feeding.

Also, when going outside, people should wear protective clothing, such as lightweight, long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and should apply insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin. Products with 10 percent or less DEET are recommended for children.

For more information, call the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's West Nile virus hotline at (303) 692-2700 or visit the website at [www.fightthebitecolorado.com](http://www.fightthebitecolorado.com).