

Protect Yourself Against West Nile Virus Ⓢ

(NAPSA)—While mosquitoes can be pests during picnics and other outdoor activities, they can also be carriers of West Nile virus, a potentially fatal disease that claimed more than 200 lives last year.

In preparation for this year's mosquito season, there is a new center to help educate the public and advance the science on topics related to the prevention of West Nile virus. The OFF!® West Nile Virus Education Center is a division of SC Johnson's Entomology Research Center—the largest, state-of-the-art private entomology research facility in the United States.

Experts at the center will be able to provide publicly-available research and education materials on West Nile virus.

"You might say that bugs are our business, and they have been for more than 40 years," said Robert J. Kopanic, Ph.D., a research scientist at the OFF West Nile Virus Education Center. "Prevention is critical, so we're hoping to raise awareness of the steps you can take to avoid mosquito-borne illness."

DEET-Based Protection

To protect against West Nile virus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend using DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide),—citing studies that indicate only products that contain DEET offer long-lasting protection after a single application. Research published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* concluded that DEET is the most effective insect repellent on the market.

"Fears over West Nile virus shouldn't keep people from enjoying the nice weather and spending time outdoors," said Kopanic. "You just need to take certain precautions, such as spraying a

DEET-based repellent on your clothing and exposed skin before any outdoor activities."

The OFF! West Nile Virus Education Center recommends the following steps to protect against West Nile virus this year:

- **Use a DEET-based repellent.** When you go outdoors, apply an insect repellent that contains DEET to your exposed skin. According to the CDC, repellents containing a higher concentration of an active ingredient (such as DEET) provide longer-lasting protection.

- **Watch out for standing water.** Mosquitoes breed in swamps, ponds and anything that holds water. To minimize mosquitoes around your home, change water in birdbaths at least twice a week and empty children's pools when not in use.

- **Cover up.** Whenever possible, wear protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants and socks while outdoors. Also, wear light-colored clothes since mosquitoes are attracted to dark colors that absorb more heat.

- **Spray your clothing.** In addition to your exposed skin, spray your clothes with repellents because mosquitoes can bite through thin material.

- **Keep them out.** Fix or install window and door screens so mosquitoes cannot get indoors. Place mosquito netting over infant carriers to protect your baby when you are outdoors.

- **Be cautious during peak biting time.** Be careful after a heavy rain, during periods of heavy cloud cover and between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.

For more information about how to protect yourself against West Nile virus, visit www.mosquitoes.com.