

COOK COUNTY HEALTH & HOSPITALS SYSTEM



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Chief Operating Officer
Cook County Department of Public Health
15900 S. Cicero Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
708-633-4000 phone

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Contact: Amy Poore 708-906-1271

First human case of West Nile virus in suburban Cook County *Residents are strongly urged to use basic prevention measures.*

Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials confirm the first human case of West Nile virus. A man in his 50s from Oak Lawn became ill late last month with the virus; he was hospitalized but was released and is recovering. The virus is widespread in suburban Cook County with 208 mosquito pools and five dead birds having tested positive for West Nile virus.

“As expected, with the recent dry hot weather, there is an increased risk for West Nile virus infection throughout suburban Cook County,” said CCDPH chief operating officer, Terry Mason, MD, FACS. “There are basic precautions our residents must put into place to reduce their risk and prevent becoming infected with WNV.”

The most effective way to prevent against becoming infected with WNV is to follow some basic steps:

- Reduce exposure to WNV by removing standing water around your home in pet bowls, flower pots, old tires, baby pools and toys. Water that is allowed to stagnate for three or four days becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Make sure your doors and windows have tightly fitting screens and repair any tears or other openings.
- Keep weeds and grass cut short and keep gutters clean and free of debris.
- Repel mosquitoes when outdoors between dusk and dawn, cover skin with lightly colored loose fitting clothing and use mosquito repellent with DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always follow the directions on the label.

Most people infected with WNV have no symptoms of illness and never become ill. But illness can occur 3-15 days after an infected mosquito bite and cause symptoms of fever, headache and body aches. The disease can affect all ages, but people over the age of 50 and those with a chronic disease, such as heart disease or cancer may be at-risk for serious complications from encephalitis or meningitis. For that reason, people who experience high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, severe headaches, or a stiff neck should see a doctor immediately.

For more information please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org, or call CCDPH at 708-633-4000.

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