



**Todd H. Stroger** • President

Cook County Board of Commissioners

**Warren L. Batts** • Chairman

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

**Jorge Ramirez** • Vice-Chairman

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

**William T. Foley** • CEO

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

**Health System Board Members**

Dr. David A. Ansell

Commissioner Jerry Butler

David N. Carvalho

Quin R. Golden

Benn Greenspan

Sr. Sheila Lyne

Dr. Luis R. Muñoz

Heather E. O'Donnell

Andrea L. Zopp

1010 West Lake Street, Suite 300

Oak Park, Illinois 60301

(708) 492-2000

TDD (708) 492-2002

**Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., MPH**

Chief Operating Officer

**For Immediate Release:** May 20, 2010

**Contact:** Amy Poore 708-492-2015

## Residents warned to protect against West Nile Virus

As warmer weather approaches, Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials would like to remind residents to be cautious and protect against West Nile Virus (WNV). Prevention is the most effective way to protect yourself and your family from becoming infected with WNV.

“In recent summer seasons, we’ve seen more cool, rainy weather and have had fewer human cases of West Nile Virus,” said CCDPH chief operating officer Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. “Although we have no way of predicting the WNV season, we know the mosquitoes that transmit WNV flourish in hot, dry weather and we know the disease is still circulating. We expect to see infected birds and mosquitoes in the weeks ahead. We must remain vigilant in our prevention efforts.”

A mosquito may transmit the virus to humans after feeding on a bird infected with WNV. To determine where there are infected birds and mosquitoes in suburban Cook County, officials conduct yearly surveillance which includes testing mosquito traps placed throughout suburban Cook County and testing dead birds reported to our WNV hotline.

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

- 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.
- Get rid of 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.
- Suburban Cook County residents may call the WNV hotline at 708-492-2650 to report dead birds for testing. Visit [www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org) for a complete list of perching birds collected by the health department.

2002 was the first year that WNV affected people in Illinois. During the summer and fall of that year, 884 people statewide became sick and 64 deaths were reported--18 of those deaths were from suburban Cook County. In 2008, 20 people were ill statewide with one death reported. Since 2005, human cases in suburban Cook County have decreased considerably from 82 cases in 2005 to 0 cases in 2009 due to prevention efforts and dedicated prevention funding.

Most people infected with WNV have no symptoms of illness and never become ill. But illness can occur 3-15 days after an infected 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 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](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org), or call CCDPH at 708-492-2000.

###