

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

(formerly Cook County Bureau of Health Services)

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Cook County Department of Public Health officials urge residents to prevent West Nile Virus

Fight the Bite!

Yearly surveillance is underway in suburban Cook County to identify mosquitoes, birds and humans possibly infected with West Nile Virus (WNV). Officials with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) urge residents to take basic steps to prevent WNV and to call the WNV hotline at 708-492-2650 to report dead birds for testing.

“The public plays an important role in protecting the health of the community by reporting dead birds,” said CCDPH chief operating officer Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. “Our Environmental Health staff will determine if a bird needs to be collected for testing.”

With the warm summer weather approaching, residents need to be aware of the possible health threats from mosquitoes and take proper precautions while outdoors and *Fight the Bite*.

- Apply mosquito repellent containing 20-35% DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus primarily to clothing. Concentrations of 10% DEET or less are recommended for children. Always follow directions on the container.
- Mosquito activity is heaviest from dusk until dawn. Limit time outdoors during these hours. If you must be outside, keep skin covered by wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks.
- Check around the outside of your property for containers that could hold water. Water that is allowed to stagnate for three or four days becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Be sure screens on windows and doors throughout your home are intact and fit tightly to prevent entry of insects.
- Keep gutters around your home cleared of debris and in good repair.

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.

Mosquitoes become infected after biting a bird that harbors the illness and human infection may occur after being bitten by an infected mosquito. 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.

To report a dead bird, call 708-492-2650. For a complete list of perching birds collected by the health department, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org, or call CCDPH at 708-492-2000.

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