



Press Release

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First human case of West Nile virus in suburban Cook County

Residents urged to take basic prevention measures

Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials confirm the first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) in suburban Cook County was identified in a woman in her 40s from Oak Lawn who became ill earlier this month; she was not hospitalized and is recovering at home. The virus continues to circulate throughout all of suburban Cook County. As of today, there are positive mosquito pools in 61 communities and three dead birds having tested positive for the virus.

“I can’t stress enough the importance of prevention during West Nile virus season,” said Cook County Department of Public Health COO Dr. Terry Mason. “Every year, the virus circulates throughout suburban Cook County and while we can’t eliminate those mosquitoes, we all have the ability to take basic prevention measures to protect against human transmission.”

The most effective way to prevent against becoming infected with WNV is to follow the 3 R’s:

- **Remove** standing water around your home in pet bowls, flower pots, old tires, baby pools and toys and remove leaves and debris from gutters so water doesn’t accumulate. Pools of water allowed to stagnate for three or four days become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- **Repel** mosquitoes when outdoors between dusk and dawn by applying insect repellent with DEET and wear light, loose fitting clothing.
- **Repair** or replace torn screens on doors and windows

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 continued updates about West Nile virus please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org or follow us on Twitter: @Cookcohealth and like us on Facebook: facebook.com/CCDPH.

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