



Public Health
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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

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Warmer Weather Brings Mosquitoes

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Encourages Residents to Take Simple Precautions against West Nile Virus

Champaign, IL – The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) encourages everyone to be aware of West Nile virus (WNV) and the simple precautions to take to avoid the virus. Viruses are most likely to be spread during the warm-weather months when mosquitoes are most active, usually beginning in the spring and lasting until the first hard frost. Most human cases occur in late summer and fall.

West Nile virus is a disease that can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, in humans and other animals. People get West Nile encephalitis from the bite of a mosquito (primarily the *Culex* group of species) that is infected with WNV. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. WNV is not spread by person-to-person contact or directly from birds to people. West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Environmental Health routinely tests dead birds in Champaign County as part of the WNV surveillance program.

Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of the illness, but some may become ill three to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about two out of 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Symptoms of West Nile virus are usually mild and include fever, headache, body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body, and swollen lymph glands. You should see a doctor immediately if you develop symptoms such as high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, or severe headaches. Serious illness, such as encephalitis, meningitis, and death are possible in extreme cases. Persons older than 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

The best way to prevent West Nile encephalitis or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and neighborhood and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. A few suggestions to help avoid WNV include:

- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk, and early evening. If outdoors at these times, wear shoes and socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. Loose-fitting, light-colored clothing is best.
- Use repellent specifically labeled as mosquito repellent when it is necessary to be outdoors, apply sparingly to exposed skin or clothing, as indicated on the repellent label. Consult a physician before using repellents on young children.
- Eliminate stagnant water in bird baths, ponds, flower pots, wading pools, old tires, and any other receptacles in which mosquitoes might breed.
- Check for and repair any tears in residential screens, including porches and patios. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.

For additional information on mosquito surveillance or West Nile virus, please contact the CUPHD Environmental Health division at (217) 373-7900 or visit <http://c-uphd/west-nile-virus.html>.

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