



Lake County
Health Department and
Community Health Center

For Immediate Release

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Health Department Re-Activates West Nile Virus Hotline

Now that spring is here, the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is urging residents to protect themselves against West Nile virus. West Nile virus is contracted from the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus.

“Eleven human cases of the disease were reported in Lake County last year,” said Dale Galassie, the Health Department’s Executive Director. “West Nile virus continues to be a local threat and residents should continue to take precautions against it.”

The Health Department has re-activated the West Nile virus hotline for county residents to report dead birds, report areas of stagnant water (which are conducive for mosquito breeding), or to obtain more information on the signs and symptoms of West Nile encephalitis. The West Nile virus hotline number is: (847) 377-8300.

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The Health Department will collect a limited number of dead crows, robins and blue jays for testing beginning June 1st. The Health Department will contact you if the bird you report is needed for testing. All other dead birds will not be collected by the Health Department. It is recommended that dead birds be disposed of by placing the bird in a plastic bag. Either double bag or tightly secure the bag and place it in your regular garbage. Dead birds cannot spread West Nile virus. The information residents provide is very important and will be used to monitor West Nile virus in the county and identify any problem areas that exist. The Health Department will share this information with municipalities and townships.

The Health Department is operating 12 mosquito monitoring sites and reviewing data from 25 other sites throughout the county to identify “hot spots” for the mosquito that carries WNV. The Department is also distributing a limited number of larvicides to municipalities and townships.

The Health Department is urging residents to prevent mosquito breeding and to prevent mosquito bites. Recommendations to prevent mosquito breeding include:

- Discard old tires, buckets, drums or any water holding containers. Poke holes in tires used as bumpers at docks.

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- Keep roof gutters and downspouts clear of debris.
- Keep trash containers covered.
- Empty plastic wading pools at least once a week and store indoors when not in use.
- Drain unused swimming pools.
- Fill in tree rot holes and hollow stumps that hold water.
- Change the water in bird baths and plant urns at least once a week.
- Store boats upside down or drain rainwater weekly.

Recommendations to prevent mosquito bites include:

- Whenever possible, limit outdoor activity at dusk.
- Wear light-colored clothing that minimizes exposed skin and provides some protection from mosquito bites.
- Make sure door and window screens fit tightly and that all holes are repaired.
- Whenever applying mosquito repellent to exposed skin, always follow label directions. The most effective repellents contain DEET, which is an ingredient used to repel mosquitoes and ticks. The more DEET a repellent contains the longer time it can protect you from mosquito bites. A higher percentage of DEET in a repellent does not mean that your protection is better, just that it will last longer. Based on a recent study: a product containing 23.8 percent DEET provided an average of five hours of protection from mosquito bites; a product containing 20 percent DEET provided almost four hours of protection; a product with 6.65 percent DEET provided almost two hours of protection.
- No definitive studies exist in the scientific literature about what concentration of DEET is safe for children. No serious illness has been linked to the use of DEET in children when used according to product recommendations. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other experts suggest that it is acceptable to apply repellent from less than 10 percent to 30 percent concentrations of DEET to infants over 2 months old. Other guidelines cite it is acceptable to use repellents containing DEET on children over 2 years of age. Parents should choose the type and concentration of repellent to be used by taking into account the amount of

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time that a child will be outdoors, exposure to mosquitoes, and the risk of mosquito-transmitted disease in the area.

- Persons who are concerned about using DEET or other products on children may wish to consult their health care provider for advice. The National Pesticide Information Center can also provide information through a toll-free number: 1-800-858-7378. There are no reported adverse events following use of repellents containing DEET in pregnant or breastfeeding women.
- Whenever possible, avoid application of repellent to bare skin, applying only to clothing.

While most people infected with WNV have no symptoms of illness, some may become ill, usually three to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus may occasionally cause serious complications. In some individuals, particularly the elderly, the virus can cause muscle weakness, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, coma or death. Information about WNV can be found on the Department's Web site at:

<http://www.co.lake.il.us/health/ehs/westnile.asp>.

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