



## Press Release

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### Take basic precautions to prevent West Nile virus while enjoying the warm weather.

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.

“We find West Nile virus in our communities every year,” said Dr. Terry Mason, CCDPH COO. “For some who become infected, it can be very debilitating, so we are encouraging residents to help Fight the Bite and take basic precautions to prevent mosquitoes from breeding or biting.”

WNV is an infection carried by the Culex mosquito. The Culex breeds in small pools of stagnant water. They rest during the day in areas of vegetation but they are most active and likely to bite between the hours of dusk and dawn. The most effective way to prevent WNV is to follow the 3 R's – Remove, Repel and Repair.

- **Remove** standing water around your home.
  - Get rid of standing water in pet bowls, flower pots, old tires, bird baths, baby pools and toys where mosquitoes can breed.
  - Make sure rain gutters drain properly.
- **Repel** mosquitoes when outdoors by applying insect repellent with DEET and follow label directions.
- **Repair** or replace 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. People over the age of 50 are at a higher 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.

Between May and October each year, CCDPH conducts surveillance to identify mosquitoes, birds and humans positive for the disease. To report a dead bird, please visit our website [www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org) or call (708) 633-8025.

CCDPH officials will continue to report West Nile virus activity throughout the season. For the most current information, please visit [www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org), Facebook/[ccdph](https://www.facebook.com/ccdph) and Twitter/[@cookcohealth](https://twitter.com/cookcohealth).

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