



News Release

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For Immediate Release

Department of Public Health announces 10th human case of West Nile virus in Massachusetts

Recommends precautions for avoiding mosquito bites

BOSTON (September 7, 2018) - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the 10th human case of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state this year. The most recent case is a man in his 60s from Essex County who was hospitalized during his illness. The risk for additional cases of WNV is being raised to high in Lynn, Malden, Melrose, Revere, Saugus and Winthrop.

“Due to information about where this individual was most likely exposed and continued findings of WNV in mosquitoes in the area, there is an increased chance that additional human illnesses could occur,” said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “That’s why it is important that people continue using insect repellents, covering exposed skin, and moving indoors when mosquitos are biting.”

“Although the weather is cooler right now, temperatures are forecast to increase again next week and so it continues to be extremely important for people to take these steps to avoid mosquito bites,” said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. “With conditions still very favorable for the mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus, we recommend everyone continue to try and avoid being bitten.”

In 2017, there were six human cases of WNV infection identified in Massachusetts.

WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. When present, WNV [symptoms](#) tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

Avoid Mosquito Bites

Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)], or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitos. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitos away from your skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

Drain Standing Water. Mosquitos lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitos to breed by either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change the water in birdbaths frequently.

Install or Repair Screens. Keep mosquitos outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

Protect Your Animals

Animal owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools – especially after heavy rains. Water troughs provide excellent mosquito breeding habitats and should be flushed out at least once a week during the summer months to reduce mosquitos near paddock areas. Horse owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitos. Owners should also speak with their veterinarian about mosquito repellents approved for use in animals and vaccinations to prevent WNV and EEE. If an animal is diagnosed with WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to DAR, Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795 and to the Department of Public Health (DPH) by calling 617-983-6800.

More information, including all WNV and EEE positive results, can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

