
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preliminary Tests Suspect West Nile Virus in Kent County Man

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) says that preliminary testing determined a man in his sixties suffered from West Nile Virus in August. It is the first case of illness this summer. The man was released from the hospital and continues to recover at home. KCHD is waiting for state results to confirm the diagnosis.

KCHD received a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health to increase mosquito surveillance in 2014. This year, health department staff have been capturing mosquitoes to test for those carrying West Nile virus. Positive results from this testing serve as an early warning system for the presence of WNV in Kent County. Two tests in one city came back with West Nile virus present; the city treated those areas with larvicide. “The good news is that weather conditions here this summer have not been ideal for the culex mosquito, which carries West Nile virus,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer. “Kent County typically sees cases of West Nile virus starting in July, peaking in August/September, but we should be aware of the risk and how to prevent getting infected as long as mosquitoes are present.”

Protect yourself and your family:

- Make sure to eliminate any standing water at home, as this is where mosquitoes breed. Empty water from birdbaths, flower pots, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans twice a week. Clear rain gutters of debris. Throw out tarps, old tires and other items that could collect water.
- Use insect repellent when outdoors. Apply repellent to clothing and exposed skin, and always follow directions on the product label.
- Don't apply repellent on cuts, wounds or irritated skin. You should not apply repellent around the eyes or mouth, and if using spray, apply spray to your hands first, and then apply to face.
- Products containing *oil of lemon eucalyptus* should not be used on children under three years of age.
- When using repellent on children, put it on your hands first, then on the child. Children tend to put their hands in or near their mouths, so don't apply repellent to a child's hands.
- After you and your children get back indoors, wash off the repellent with soap and water, and wash treated clothing before wearing again.
- Avoid areas where mosquitoes are likely to be, such as wooded areas or swampy land.

According to the CDC, most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms, though up to 20% may develop mild illness with symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, rash, and swollen lymph glands. Some people will develop severe illness, with severe headaches, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and rarely, death. Persons 55 and over have the highest risk of severe disease.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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