



Illinois Department of Public Health reports first mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile in Godfrey

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SPRINGFIELD –The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reporting the first mosquitoes to test positive for West Nile virus in Illinois for 2017. Madison County Health Department staff collected mosquitoes testing positive on May 22-23, 2017 in Godfrey.

“The weather is warming up and we’re starting to see West Nile virus,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Although we see West Nile virus in Illinois every year, it’s still important to take precautions to protect yourself by wearing insect repellent and getting rid of standing water around your home.”

Monitoring for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests for mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile virus-like symptoms. People who observe a sick or dying crow, blue jay, robin or other perching bird should contact their local health department, which will determine if the bird will be picked up for testing.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus.

The first West Nile virus positive result in 2016 was a blue jay in Douglas County collected on May 20, 2016. Last year, 61 counties in Illinois reported a West Nile virus

positive mosquito batch, bird and/or human case. For the 2016 season, IDPH reported 152 human cases (although human cases are underreported), including five deaths. No human cases of West Nile virus have been reported so far this year.

While IDPH is also monitoring for Zika virus, which is primarily transmitted through the bite of a mosquito, the main type of mosquito that carries Zika virus, *Aedes aegypti*, is different and is rarely found in Illinois. However, taking some simple precautions can help you avoid mosquito bites, regardless of the type of mosquito or the diseases they carry.

Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – reduce, repel, and report

- **REDUCE** - make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut.

Eliminate, or refresh each week, all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires, and any other containers.

- **REPEL** - when outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- **REPORT** – report locations where you see water sitting stagnant for more than a week such as roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes. The local health department or city government may be able to add larvicide to the water, which will kill any mosquito eggs.

Additional information about [West Nile virus](#) can be found on the [IDPH website](#).