

First Human West Nile Virus Death In Illinois For 2021

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the first human West Nile virus-related death in Illinois for 2021. A Will County resident who first became ill in late August and tested positive for West Nile virus has died.

“Although we are already into fall, we are expecting a warm weekend, and West Nile virus remains a risk until the first hard frost,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “It’s important for everyone to continue taking precautions such as using insect repellent, wearing long-sleeve shirts and pants, and staying indoors between dusk and dawn.”

Currently, 40 human cases of West Nile virus have been reported in Illinois. Last year, IDPH reported 42 human cases (although human cases are underreported), including four deaths. In 2020, 26 counties in Illinois reported a West Nile virus-positive mosquito batch, bird, horse, and/or human case.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito. 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 symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk for severe illness.

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

- **REDUCE** – eliminate or refresh each week, all sources of standing water. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings.
- **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.
- **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 larvae.

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