



Municipal Clerks for Mayors, Elected Officials and Staff



Mayors Advisory

September 4, 2013

Re: Public Health Reminder - West Nile Virus Season

Dear Mayor:

The Department of Health announced yesterday that two New Jersey residents have died of complications related to West Nile Virus (WNV). A 78-year-old Gloucester County woman developed fever, blurred vision, weakness and diarrhea in mid-August, was hospitalized and died on August 24. A 92-year-old man from Morris County developed fever and muscle weakness in mid-August, was admitted to the hospital with encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and died on August 31.

Six New Jersey residents have tested positive for WNV: One each in Bergen, Burlington, Gloucester and Morris counties and two in Camden County. All counties except Cumberland and Salem have detected WNV activity in mosquitoes.

"September is the peak of West Nile Virus season so I encourage everyone to take steps to prevent mosquito bites by wearing insect repellent with DEET and to limit time outdoors during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active," said Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd.

The Department is reminding residents to take the following additional steps to protect against WNV including:

- Maintain screen doors and windows
- Use insect netting on infant carriers and strollers
- Wear long sleeves and pants whenever possible

In July, the Department launched a public awareness campaign alerting people to the dangers of West Nile Virus. Ads have been featured on NJ Transit trains and buses since July and Public Service Announcements in English and Spanish began airing last month. Additional WNV information is available on the Department's Sandy recovery website at:

http://www.state.nj.us/health/er/hurricane_recovery_resources.shtml

Last year was the most active West Nile Virus season in the state's history with 48 cases and six deaths. In 2011, there were seven cases and no deaths. In 2010, there were 30 cases and two fatalities.

New Jersey residents can also take steps to reduce the mosquito population by:

- Disposing of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that have accumulated on your property
- Removing standing water from any tires on your property. Used tires are a popular breeding ground for mosquitoes
- Drilling holes in the bottom and elevate recycling containers that are left outdoors
- Cleaning clogged roof gutters on an annual basis, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. Roof gutters are easily overlooked but can produce millions of mosquitoes each season
- Turning over plastic wading pools when not in use. A wading pool becomes a mosquito producer if it is not used on a regular basis
- Turning over wheelbarrows and not allowing water to stagnate in bird baths
- Cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers

Many people infected with West Nile Virus do not become ill and may not develop symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they may be mild or severe and show up three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Mild symptoms include flu-like illness with fever, headache, body aches, nausea and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Severe symptoms include high fever, neck stiffness and swelling of the brain (encephalitis or meningitis) which can lead to coma, convulsions and death.

Anyone who suspects they may have WNV should visit their health care provider for further evaluation and potential testing for WNV. There is no treatment for WNV, and mild to moderate infections usually resolve within 7 to 10 days. More severe infections may require hospitalization and supportive treatment.

For more information on West Nile Virus, please visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/westnile> or
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito>.

Very truly yours,

William G. Dressel, Jr.
Executive Director

