



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
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State Activates Dead Bird Reporting Hotline to Track West Nile Virus

State health officials announce they have reactivated the statewide, toll-free **Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610**. Persons who observe a dead bird can call the hotline and to arrange to have the bird tested for West Nile virus. Hotline staff can answer questions about dead birds and provide information on safe handling and disposal. People should not handle dead birds with their bare hands.

“Dead birds act as an early warning system for West Nile virus,” said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “Finding the virus in birds indicates that West Nile virus may be present in the local mosquito population and that people should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites. While very few mosquitoes actually carry the virus, Wisconsin residents need to be informed of West Nile virus activity so that they can take steps to avoid being bitten by infected mosquitoes.”

West Nile virus (WNV) is spread to people by the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. Mosquitoes get infected with WNV by feeding on infected birds and can then transmit the virus to other animals, birds, and humans.

Most people infected with West Nile virus will not have any symptoms. Of the approximately twenty percent of infected people who develop illness, most have milder symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

Symptoms begin between 3 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito and typically last a few days. If you become ill and think you have West Nile virus infection, contact your healthcare provider, who can help treat your symptoms.

In rare cases, West Nile virus can cause severe disease with additional symptoms including muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, coma, and potentially death. Older people are at greater risk of developing severe illness.

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent West Nile virus infection. Since all mosquitoes need water to lay their eggs and complete their life cycle, reducing or eliminating standing water reduces potential breeding sites, mosquito numbers and the risk for mosquito bites.

Below are measures to help decrease exposure to mosquitoes:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to skin and spray clothing with insect repellent since mosquitoes may bite through clothing. The CDC recommends using products that contain active ingredients approved and registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Ensure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry
- Properly dispose of items that hold water such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or discarded tires

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- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers
- Trim tall grass, weeds and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of WNV since 2001. The surveillance program monitors wild birds, horses, and humans for West Nile virus. In 2002, the state documented its first human infections with 52 human cases. This was followed by 17 human cases in 2003, and 12 in 2004, 17 in 2005, 21 in 2006, 12 in 2007, and eight in 2008.

For more information on West Nile virus, go to <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/westNilevirus/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

For information regarding mosquito repellents, visit http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm

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