
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For additional information contact:

Steve Kelso at (616) 632-7274 or Steve.Kelso@kentcountymi.gov

West Nile Virus Found in Mosquitoes

West Nile Virus is present in Kent County. People can take simple steps to protect themselves.

GRAND RAPIDS – Through ongoing surveillance and testing the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has discovered mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus in five zip codes 49504, 49505, 49507, 49519 and 49525. While these are the only positive tests so far in 2019, the findings should serve as a reminder to all who live in West Michigan that the West Nile virus (WNV) season is upon us and will remain until after the first frost.

“Given our experience, we fully expect to find West Nile virus every year through our surveillance,” said Dr. Adam London, Administrative Health Officer at KCHD. “We then share this information with the community, so people can make more informed decisions about mosquito control.”

WNV is spread primarily by infected Culex mosquitoes. Only about 20% of the people infected will notice symptoms that may include headache, body aches, joint pains and fatigue. Most people with this type of WNV will completely recover. Rarely, people infected may develop severe illness that can affect the central nervous system. Recovery from this type of WNV may take several months. Some damage to the central nervous system can be permanent. In rare instances the disease can lead to death. More information about WNV can be found [here](#).

The Kent County Health Department is also aware that Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) has recently been detected in South West Michigan. It is quite possible that it exists in Kent County as well. EEE is also spread by mosquitos and is a potentially serious disease that can affect anyone. Children and people over age 60 are more likely to get a more severe form of EEE illness.

EEE is found primarily in areas with swamps and bogs. The risk of bites from infected mosquitoes is highest for people who work or play outdoors in these areas. More information about EEE can be found [here](#).

Precautions for both diseases include wearing a mosquito repellent that contains 10 – 35% DEET, wearing light colored clothing and staying indoors during dusk. You can help stop mosquitoes from breeding by removing or refreshing water in bird baths, children’s wading pools, water bowls for your pets. Empty other small containers that can collect water in your yard.

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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 265 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 three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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