
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 During Kent County Mosquito Surveillance

GRAND RAPIDS, MI. –Ongoing surveillance and testing conducted by the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has revealed three presumptive positive instances of mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus in Kent County. The discovery comes after testing pools of mosquito remains that were trapped in the 49504 and 49525 ZIP Codes. It is important to note that these are not human cases.

“Discovering these cases in mosquitoes should serve as a reminder to everyone who lives in West Michigan that West Nile Virus season is upon us,” says Brendan Earl, Supervising Sanitarian at KCHD. “It is important for people to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites as much as possible.”

Since there is no vaccine or cure for West Nile the best treatment is prevention. KCHD recommends 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 and keeping your lawn and shrubs trimmed. More information about prevention can be found here <https://www.accesskent.com/Health/Environmental/vector.htm>.

West Nile Virus 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 West Nile virus completely recover, but fatigue may last for weeks or even months. About 1 in 150 people infected develop severe illness that can affect the central nervous system. Recovery from this type of West Nile virus may take several months. Some damage to the central nervous system can be permanent. In rare instances the disease can lead to death.

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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 260 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.