

Important Information on West Nile Virus

Louisiana is experiencing a constant rise in West Nile Virus (WNV) infections. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals reported 41 new cases of human WNV infections this month, bringing the total to 92 confirmed cases thus far for 2012. Of the 41 new cases reported, 9 were reported in Caddo and 5 in Bossier Parish. The DHH reports that 6 people have died from the virus this year. WNV is an infection transmitted by infected mosquitos. Source: LA DHH office of Public Health.

Once bitten by an infected mosquito, the person may begin to develop symptoms within 3 to 14 days. If infected, a person may experience symptoms ranging from mild headaches, body aches, fever, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands or a rash. More severe symptoms are possible, such as high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, convulsions, vision loss, numbness, coma, paralysis or even death. Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all. Those at highest risk for the disease are people with weakened immune systems and those over the age of 50.

Although there is no specific treatment for WNV there are a few easy steps you can take to drastically lessen mosquito exposure and thereby lower your risk of getting the disease. The Three "R's" of West Nile Prevention:

REDUCE Exposure - Avoid being outdoors when mosquitos are most active, especially during their feeding times between dusk and dawn. Protect yourself by wearing long sleeve shirts and pants and avoiding outdoor activities. Ensure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens and eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitos can breed, including bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, clogged rain gutters and other receptacles.

REPEL – When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Remember to apply insect repellent; the CDC recommends a spray containing DEET (no more than 30% if used on children and nothing on infants younger than 2 months).

REPORT - Contact your Parish or city sanitation department to report areas of stagnant water, flooded yards and similar location that may produce mosquitos so they may be treated. Barksdale AFB as well as Caddo-Bossier Parishes have an active mosquito control program ongoing since March and are effectively combatting mosquito infestations by putting out environmentally friendly larvacide treatment for standing waters in drainage ditches, bayous, as well as fogging with pesticide to knock down active mosquito vectors. 2nd Medical Group is actively surveying adult mosquito populations on base to assist in determining locations to prioritize pesticide use, such as fogging. Your base Civil Engineering, Pest Management, Aerospace Medicine, and Emergency Management staff are cooperating with Caddo-Bossier Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in control efforts. It is imperative that you use suggested controls and protect yourself and your family members while being outdoors. If you have any questions regarding this or any other community health issue, please do not hesitate to contact your base Public Health office at 456-6589/6702.