

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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First West Nile Virus-Related Death in the State Reported in Suburban Cook County

Bridgeview, IL – Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) has confirmed the first human West Nile virus-related death in suburban Cook County and Illinois this year. A suburban Cook County resident, whose age is in the 60s, has died. Laboratory testing has confirmed that West Nile virus was a contributing factor to the resident's death.

West Nile virus occurs in humans when they are bitten by mosquitoes that contracted the virus by feeding on infected birds.

The risk of West Nile virus in suburban Cook County remains high. Since May 11, when the surveillance period began, through Sept. 6, suburban Cook County has recorded [33 cases of West Nile virus](#), almost twice the number of cases from last year. Of the total 33 West Nile virus cases, 22 have been neuroinvasive, meaning that the central nervous system was affected. Last year, 19 West Nile virus cases and five deaths were reported in suburban Cook County. Overall, the state of Illinois recorded [69 human cases of West Nile virus](#), including 50 in Cook County, which includes the city of Chicago, and 13 fatalities last year.

Most cases of West Nile virus infection have either mild or no symptoms and may go unreported, so case counts are underestimates.

"The year's first death from West Nile virus in Illinois is a sobering reminder that mosquito-borne illnesses are still with us," said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. "It's important to take appropriate precautions as the weather remains warm. We urge everyone to 'Fight the Bite' by practicing the Three R's: Reduce opportunities for exposure to mosquitoes. Repel insect bites by wearing protective clothing and using insect repellent. Report stagnant water that can serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes to your local health department."

"As long as mosquitoes are flying around, people are at risk of mosquito bites and of contracting West Nile virus," said Cook County Department of Public Health Chief Operating Officer Dr. Kiran Joshi. "Everyone should take steps to protect themselves from

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West Nile virus, especially seniors, who are at higher risk for severe illness and death.”

WEST NILE VIRUS PROTECTION TIPS:

Cook County Department of Public Health encourages residents to take the following extra precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites and West Nile virus:

- Drain standing water around your home, do not allow mosquitoes to breed.
- Apply EPA-registered insect repellents containing 20% to 50% DEET (for adults) and 20% to 25% DEET (for children).
- Be extra precautions or limit time outdoors during dusk and dawn
- Repair torn screens and ensure that they are tight fitting without gaps.

Get more West Nile virus prevention tips here: [Fight the Bite Cook County – Cook County Department of Public Health](#).

Although most people never get ill from infection, some may develop mild symptoms, such as fever, headache, rash and body aches three to 15 days after infection. Severe West Nile virus symptoms could include a high fever, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness and inflammation of the brain, which may lead to permanent neurological damage or death.

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