



## HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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## NEWS

### West Nile Virus Begins Early This Year

**HAMILTON COUNTY, Ohio** – West Nile Virus (WNV) is being detected earlier and in more locations across Ohio than usual. “We have not seen infection rates this high or this early since 2002,” according to Greg Kesterman, Hamilton County Public Health Assistant Health Commissioner. “The Ohio Department of Health indicates that WNV has been detected in 11 of the 14 counties currently conducting surveillance. Neighboring states are reporting similar infection rate increases, indicating the problem is widespread,” he adds.

WNV is a potentially serious illness. Experts believe WNV is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall. Some theories behind the early detection of WNV include current drought and heat conditions. “WNV is transmitted through *Culex* mosquitoes. This species does well in drought, preferring to breed in organically rich water sources, such as those found in shrinking water in ditches and catch basins. The heat we've experienced also speeds up their life cycle and amplifies the virus,” Kesterman says.

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“It is important for residents to remember that we can all take action to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and take precautions to avoid mosquito bites,” Kesterman says. “Even though West Nile Virus is present in our area, the chances of developing severe symptoms remain small.”

Hamilton County Public Health staff is conducting surveillance and community outreach activities throughout the County. They will be looking for areas of standing water, applying larvicide, making sure swimming pools are operating properly and advising residents on precautions they can take to avoid mosquito bites.

Hamilton County Public Health continues to advise all Hamilton County residents to **DRAIN, DUNK** and **PROTECT** in an effort reduce the mosquito population and prevent West Nile Virus:

### **DRAIN**

- Look for and drain sources of standing water on your property – litter, tires, buckets, flower pots, wading pools and similar items that could create standing water and become mosquito breeding sites.
- Frequently change water in bird baths and pet bowls.
- Drain small puddles after heavy rainstorms.

### **DUNK**

- Apply mosquito larvicide, sometimes called mosquito “dunks,” to areas of standing water that cannot be drained. The “dunks” are environmentally safe and won’t harm pets. You can purchase them at your local hardware store.

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### PROTECT

- Cut your grass and trim shrubbery.
- Make sure screens in windows and doors are tight-fitting and free from defects.
- Wear long sleeves and pants during peak mosquito hours – dawn and dusk.
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent such as those containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always follow the directions on the package.

West Nile Virus is a viral disease affecting the central nervous system that can be transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. It is important to note that most people who are bitten by an infected mosquito will never become sick. Everyone, however, should be aware of the symptoms of WNV. Symptoms may develop two-15 days after someone is bitten by an infected mosquito.

**No Symptoms in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about four out of five) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

**Milder Symptoms in Some People.** Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected will display symptoms which can include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have been sick for several weeks.

**Serious Symptoms in a Few People.** It is estimated that approximately one in 150 persons infected with West Nile Virus will develop a more severe form of disease. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks and neurological effects may be permanent.

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While all residents of areas where virus activity has been identified are at risk, people over age 50 have the highest risk of developing severe WNV infections. Anyone experiencing any of these symptoms should contact their healthcare provider for evaluation.

For more information on West Nile Virus, please contact Hamilton County Public Health at (513) 946-7800 or visit us online at [www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org](http://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org).

Download our Homeowner's Guide to Mosquito Control on our Website:  
[www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/files/MosBrochure.pdf](http://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/files/MosBrochure.pdf).

Visit <http://www.youtube.com/HamCoHealth> for the latest information on West Nile Virus in Hamilton County.

*Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 460,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.*

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