



Talking Points West Nile Virus

We are seeing an upsurge of West Nile Virus cases in Bergen County, specifically in the areas of Dumont, Lodi, Maywood, Ridgefield Park and Teaneck so people should take precautions to minimize the risk of mosquito bites. These precautions include:

- Use of an approved insect repellent every time you go outside and follow the instructions on the label. Approved repellents are those that contain DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Regularly drain standing water, including water that collects in empty cans, tires, buckets, clogged rain gutters and saucers under potted plants. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water.
- Wear long sleeves and pants at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use air conditioning or make sure there are screens on all doors and windows to keep mosquitoes from entering the home.
- The elderly and those with chronic medical conditions or compromised immune systems are more vulnerable to developing West Nile illness bitten by an infected mosquito.
- There is no effective treatment for West Nile Virus illnesses, so it's important to prevent mosquito bites.

COMMUNITY MESSAGES:

Elderly neighbors may need help repairing their windows or door screens to help keep mosquitoes out and with other precautions to reduce their risk of becoming ill. Also remember the less fortunate in your communities who may need assistance in reducing their risk of illness. The virus is spread by the bite of a mosquito infected with the West Nile virus. It is not spread from person to person. Many people infected do not become ill and may not develop symptoms. About 20 percent of infected people will develop West Nile fever. When symptoms occur, they may be mild or severe. Mild symptoms include flu-like illness with fever, headache, body aches, nausea and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Severe symptoms include high fever, neck stiffness and swelling of the brain (encephalitis) which can lead to coma, convulsions and death. Less than 1 percent of infected people will develop severe symptoms. People over the age of 50 and people with weak immune systems are at greater risk of developing severe illness.

BCDHS has updated the West Nile Virus (WNV) Hot Line to answer common questions. The WNV Hot Line can be reached 24/7 at 201-225-7000. Callers have the option of pressing the corresponding number to receive specific answers to their questions about disease, symptoms, prevention, and actions taken by BCDHS and Mosquito Control. Information on West Nile Virus can also be acquired through the Bergen County website at <https://www.co.bergen.nj.us/component/content/article/13-news-flash/29-bergen-bites-back-2?Itemid=783>



SPRAYING ACTIVITY MESSAGES:

The majority of the affected Bergen county areas are performing enhanced ground-based spraying. There will be aerial spraying over some areas of Bergen County. Aerial spraying is a very effective and safe way to kill adult mosquitoes in large, densely populated areas. We understand that many people have concerns about exposure during aerial spraying; for those people, health officials suggest the following precautions:

- Minimize exposure. Avoid being outside, close windows and consider keeping pets inside while spraying occurs.
- If skin or clothes are exposed, wash them with soap and water.
- Rinse homegrown fruits and vegetables with water as a general precautionary measure.
- Cover small ornamental fish ponds.
- Because the chemical breaks down quickly in sunlight and water, no special precautions are suggested for outdoor swimming areas.
- Should a resident wish to not have their property sprayed, please contact the Bergen County Mosquito Control at (201) 634 – 2881.