



News Release



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Health Department Confirms Second and Third Human Cases of West Nile Virus in Shelby County

MEMPHIS, TN – The Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) recently confirmed two additional cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Shelby County. The reported cases are a thirty-three year old female and an eighty-two year old female. With this case, a total of five cases have been reported statewide this year. SCHD health officials urge residents to continue taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites and protecting themselves against WNV.

“The Vector Control Program continues to monitor the mosquito population throughout Shelby County. All residents are encouraged to remain attentive and protect themselves through the use of mosquito repellents; particularly those who are outside during dusk and nighttime hours,” said Dan Sprenger, Ph.D, manager of the SCHD Vector Control Program. “Mosquitoes will continue to breed and present a risk for transmitting West Nile virus until after the first frost of the year.”

Mosquito populations are often at their peak between May and October. With no human vaccine for WNV; residents are encouraged to be vigilant when controlling mosquito populations around their homes and businesses by doing the following:

- Wear DEET-containing mosquito repellents according to label directions
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Check properties for objects - including old tires, flower pots and drip plates, tin cans, buckets, and children’s toys - that collect rainwater and either drain or dispose of the water
- Install or repair windows and door screens
- Empty, clean and refill birdbaths and small wading pools weekly
- Empty and refill pets’ water bowls every few days
- Repair failed septic systems
- Repair leaky outside faucets
- Clean rain gutters and down spouts
- Secure swimming pool covers tightly and remove any standing water after rainfall
- Store wheelbarrows, canoes and boats upside down
- Stock ornamental lawn ponds with fish (*Gambusia*) that eat mosquito larvae (*Gambusia* fish are available FREE from the Vector Control Program. Please call for availability 901-222-9715)

Humans become infected with WNV via a bite from an already infected mosquito. Severe symptoms occur in a small number of people, about one in 150 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

Fewer than 20 percent of those who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. These symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people may become sick for several weeks.

An estimated four out of five infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all. Of these, it is not possible for humans to transfer the virus through casual contact such as kissing or touching.

Individuals over the age of 50 are more likely to develop serious symptoms of WNV if they do get sick and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

Regardless of age, time spent outdoors increases the chance of being bitten by an infected mosquito. It is important to avoid mosquito bites if you spend long periods of time outside, either working or playing, especially during dusk or nighttime hours.

A copy of the 2012 WNV report, containing protective strategies, statistics and surveillance, can be found at <http://shelbycountyttn.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/12439>.