



News Release

Shelby County Health Department
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Ten Human Cases of West Nile Virus in Shelby County

MEMPHIS, TN - The Shelby County Health Department has recently confirmed four additional human cases of West Nile Virus in Shelby County, bring the county total to ten (10). There have been a total of fifteen (15) cases reported statewide so far this year. The Shelby County Health Department urges citizens to continue to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites to protect themselves against West Nile virus.

The three most recent cases reported in Shelby County include a 71 year old female, a 53 year old female, a 46 year old male and a 56 year old male. Earlier cases have ranged in ages from 27 to 69 years old.

"To date, we have discovered mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus in all ZIP codes within Shelby County. All citizens should continue to protect themselves, particularly those who are outside during dusk and nighttime hours," said Dr. Dan Sprenger, Manager of Shelby County Health Department's 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 at their peak May through October. There is no human vaccine for West Nile virus; therefore, citizens are encouraged to be vigilant as it relates to controlling mosquito populations around their homes and businesses. Citizens are encouraged to:

- Wear DEET-containing mosquito repellants 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)

Humans can catch the West Nile virus through being bitten by an infected mosquito. Serious symptoms occur in a small number of people, about one in 150 according to the Centers for Disease Control. Severe symptoms include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

Just fewer than 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache and 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.

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

People 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. Pay attention to avoid mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing, especially during dusk or nighttime hours.

For more information on West Nile virus, visit the Tennessee Department of Health website at <http://health.state.tn.us/CEDS/WNV/wnvhome.asp>.

