



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# First Human Case of West Nile Virus Reported in La Crosse County This Year

### Continue to Prevent Mosquito Bites

La Crosse, WI – Local health officials are advising residents to continue to protect themselves against mosquito bites as they announce the first person confirmed to have [West Nile virus \(WNV\)](#) illness in a resident of La Crosse County. [WNV activity](#) has previously been detected in other parts of Wisconsin so far this year, including other human cases of WNV illness as well as mosquitoes and animals infected with WNV.

West Nile virus is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito and is not spread from person to person. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on infected birds.

WNV illness is most common in Wisconsin during the months of August and September. However, the risk of contracting WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses such as [Jamestown Canyon virus](#), [La Crosse encephalitis virus](#), or [eastern equine encephalitis virus](#), is present anytime mosquitoes are active, so it is important for people to be vigilant about preventing mosquito bites throughout the rest of the summer and into early fall.

Most people (80%) who are infected with WNV do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash, and fatigue. However, some people (less than 1%) who become infected with the virus get seriously ill with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, confusion, paralysis, and coma. Older adults and those with compromised immune systems are at greater risk of developing severe illness that can be fatal. It is important that people contact a health care provider if they suspect they have WNV illness.

The best way to avoid illnesses spread by mosquitoes is to reduce exposure to mosquitoes and eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Mosquitoes will no longer be active once there is a hard frost (temperatures below 28 degrees for at least four consecutive hours), but until then, people are urged to protect themselves. The La Crosse County Health Department recommends the following:

**Avoid Mosquito Bites**

- Apply an insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 to exposed skin and clothing.
- Prior to heading outdoors, treat clothing with permethrin; do not apply permethrin directly to skin.
- Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning hours, when mosquitoes that spread WNV are most active.
- Wear loose-fitting long-sleeves and long pants when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

**Mosquito-Proof Your Home**

- Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your home by removing stagnant water from items around your property.
  - Empty standing water that has collected in tin cans, plastic containers, flower pots, discarded tires, roof gutters, and downspouts.
  - Turn over wheelbarrows, kiddie pools, buckets, and small boats such as canoes and kayaks when not in use.
  - Change the water in bird baths and pet dishes at least every three days.
  - Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Make sure window and door screens are intact and tightly-fitted to prevent mosquitoes from getting into your home.
- Trim or mow tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.