

**For Immediate Release:**

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## First West Nile Virus Death Reported in LA County Residents are encouraged to take precautions against mosquitoes

LOS ANGELES –The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has confirmed the first death of West Nile virus (WNV) infection in Los Angeles County for the 2017 season (excluding Long Beach and Pasadena as cases identified in those cities are reported by their local health departments). The resident was from the San Fernando Valley area, who was hospitalized in early August and died from WNV-associated neuro-invasive disease.

This week, eight new WNV cases, including one asymptomatic blood donor, were documented in Los Angeles County, for a total of 46 cases this year.

“West Nile virus is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization, death and long-term disability, especially in older adults and people with weak immune systems,” said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer for Los Angeles County. “Everyone should take precautions against mosquitoes by using insect repellent containing an effective ingredient such as DEET, and eliminating any standing water around their home where mosquitoes can breed.”

Persons over 50 years of age and those with chronic medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes or hypertension are at increased risk of severe neuro-invasive disease from WNV infection that can result in meningitis, encephalitis, limb paralysis and even death. There is no specific treatment for WNV. For many, recovery from their illness can take a year or more with ongoing physical and mental impairment.

Public Health performs surveillance to identify people with WNV infection, and collaborates with local vector control agencies to target areas for mosquito control activities and health education. WNV-infected mosquitoes, dead birds, and sentinel chickens have been identified across LA County with heightened risk in the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Antelope Valley, and eastern county areas. All county residents are encouraged to take protective action to prevent mosquito bites.

In 2016 in LA County, 153 human cases including 6 deaths due to WNV were reported. In recent years, the peak month of onset of WNV illness has been September, with cases continuing into November.

**About West Nile Virus:**

WNV is primarily spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito; mosquitoes can become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most mosquitoes do not carry WNV and most people bitten by a mosquito are not exposed to the virus. WNV is not spread through person-to-person contact or directly from birds to humans.

WNV illness can be very severe, causing meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, and death. Serious disease usually occurs in older adults and those with underlying medical conditions that reduce their immunity. These severe illnesses represent “the tip of the iceberg” with most infections resulting in no illness or mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and skin rash. Symptoms of WNV could appear within three to 12 days after infection.

**To decrease risk of infection:**

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.

- Regularly use mosquito repellents containing EPA-registered ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of eucalyptus.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Check your window screens for holes.
- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito-eating fish, which eat mosquito eggs and larvae.
- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

**More information:**

- For statistics on West Nile Virus in Los Angeles County, visit: [publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm)
- Information on West Nile Virus by phone: (800) 232-4636.
- Information on West Nile Virus on the web: [westnile.ca.gov](http://westnile.ca.gov)

**Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:**

- Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656
- Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370
- San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466
- Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917
- Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 933- 5321
- Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004
- City of Long Beach Health and Human Services: (562) 570-4132

Report dead birds online at [westnile.ca.gov/report\\_wnv.php](http://westnile.ca.gov/report_wnv.php) or call (877) 968-2473. Stagnant swimming pools or "green pools" should be reported to the Public Health's Environmental Health Division at (888) 700-9995, or to a local vector control agency. A district locator based on zip code can be found at: [socalmosquito.org](http://socalmosquito.org).

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of over 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Los Angeles County Public Health, visit [PublicHealth.LACounty.gov](http://PublicHealth.LACounty.gov), and follow LA County Public Health on social media at [twitter.com/LAPublicHealth](https://twitter.com/LAPublicHealth), [facebook.com/LAPublicHealth](https://facebook.com/LAPublicHealth), and [youtube.com/LAPublicHealth](https://youtube.com/LAPublicHealth).

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prevent disease, and promote health and well-being.*