



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: Local Media and Press Release Subscribers
From: Katrina Harwood, Health Officer
Date: September 13, 2024

First Human Case of West Nile Virus Reported in Rock County This Year
Continue to Prevent Mosquito Bites

ROCK COUNTY, WI – Local health officials are advising residents to continue to protect themselves against mosquito bites as they announce this year’s first human case of [West Nile virus \(WNV\)](#) in a resident of Rock County. This is the seventh person with WNV illness reported in the state this year. [WNV activity](#) has also previously been detected in animals, mosquitoes, and healthy blood donors whose blood screened positive for WNV.

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

The majority of people who develop WNV illness will be exposed to the virus 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, 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. Rock County Public Health (RCPH) 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.



Helping Rock County Reach Its Full Health Potential

3328 US Hwy 51 N, Janesville, WI 53545-0772 | PO Box 1088, Janesville, WI 53547-1088
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- 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

- Make sure window and door screens are intact and tightly fitted to prevent mosquitoes from getting into your home.
- Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your home by removing stagnant water from items around your property, such as tin cans, plastic containers, flowerpots, 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.
- Trim or mow tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.

For more information about WNV and how to protect yourself, visit our [Environmental Health website](#), the Department of Health Service's [mosquito bite prevention website](#), or call (608) 757-5440. RCPH remains committed to the environmental wellbeing of Rock County residents and will continue to provide updates as necessary.

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Rock County Public Health serves Rock County residents by improving population health outcomes and removing barriers through community partnerships to provide everyone the opportunity to reach their full health potential. Visit the Rock County Public Health [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Please send all media inquiries to:

Molly Mueller, Communications Specialist

Rock County Public Health

(608) 247-1755

molly.mueller@co.rock.wi.us



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