



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County Resident Dies from West Nile Virus

GRAND RAPIDS – A Kent County patient who had been diagnosed with West Nile Virus passed away Wednesday. It is the first death due to the West Nile Virus in Kent County this year. There are currently 25 confirmed or probable cases of individuals who have become ill after contracting the virus in Kent County.

“Our deepest sympathies go out to the family of this patient,” said Cathy Raevsky, the Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “As we approach the Labor Day weekend, many families will be planning outdoor activities. Please take a few minutes to make sure you are protecting yourself and your family from this virus.”

The first case of West Nile Virus occurred in Kent County in 2002, when 60 cases were reported and four people died. Currently, Kent County is experiencing our second-highest total cases in the past decade. The state of Michigan has 104 confirmed or probable cases at this time. People over the age of fifty are at highest risk of complications from West Nile Virus.

The forecast calls for more warm weather this weekend, which means mosquitoes will continue to be an issue. While most mosquito populations are down this year over last year, the type of mosquito that carries the West Nile Virus (*culex*) are actually on the rise. You should still keep your guard up, even if you don't notice mosquitoes in your vicinity. More information about the West Nile Virus can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/q&a.htm>.

The Kent County Health Department continues to issue the following recommendations:

- Use insect repellent when outdoors. Apply repellent to clothing and exposed skin, and follow directions on the product label.
- Don't apply repellent under clothing, or on cuts, wounds or irritated skin. You should not apply repellent around the eyes or mouth, and if using spray, apply spray to your hands first, and then apply to face.
- Repellent should not be used on infants under 2 months old at all. KCHD recommends putting netting over the infant's stroller. DEET-containing products should be avoided for children 24 months of age or younger, and those containing *oil of lemon eucalyptus* should not be used on children under three years of age.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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- When using repellent on children, put it on your hands first, then on the child. Children tend to put their hands in or near their mouths, so don't apply repellent to a child's hands.
- After you and your children get back indoors, wash off the repellent with soap and water, and wash treated clothing before wearing again.
- At home, be sure you are not making it easy for mosquitoes to breed. Make sure to eliminate any standing water. Twice a week, empty water from birdbaths, flower pots, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans. Make sure rain gutters are clear of debris. Throw out old tires and other items that could collect water.
- Avoid areas where mosquitoes are likely to thrive, such as wooded lots or swampy land.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report nearly 1600 cases of West Nile virus nationwide. Michigan, Texas, Mississippi, South Dakota, Louisiana and Oklahoma account for 70% of cases at this time.

According to the CDC, 80% of people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. Nearly 20% may develop mild illness with symptoms including: fever, headache, body aches, rash and swollen lymph glands. Approximately one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness which may be characterized by severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and rarely, death.

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