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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TESTING OF MOSQUITOES FINDS PROBABILITY OF  
WEST NILE VIRUS IN KENT COUNTY**

GRAND RAPIDS – More than 40 human cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection were confirmed in Kent County residents last year. The caseload prompted staff at the Kent County Health Department to trap and test mosquito populations this summer. Positive results from this testing are meant to serve as an early warning system for the presence of the virus in Kent County. Today, testing of mosquitoes collected at a random site in West Michigan during the past week yielded a result that was preliminarily positive for WNV.

"This test result confirms that the mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus are likely in our county," said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. "This information should encourage residents take steps to protect their families from mosquitoes." Only one case of illness has been confirmed in Michigan, in St. Joseph County, so far this year.

The Kent County Health Department recommends the following:

- At home, be sure you are not making it easy for mosquitoes to breed. Make sure to eliminate any standing water. Empty water from birdbaths, flower pots, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans twice a week. Make sure rain gutters are clear of debris. Throw out tarps, old tires and other items that could collect water.
- Use insect repellent when outdoors. Apply repellent to clothing and exposed skin, and always 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. Products containing *oil of lemon eucalyptus* should not be used on children under three years of age.
- 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.
- Avoid areas where mosquitoes are likely to be, such as wooded areas or swampy land.

West Nile Virus can produce a range of symptoms in humans. According to the CDC, most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms, though up to 20% may develop mild illness with symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, rash, and swollen lymph glands. Some people will develop severe illness, with severe headaches, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and rarely, death. Persons 55 and over have the highest risk of severe disease.

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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](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

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