
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For additional information contact:

Steve Kelso at (616) 632-7274 or Steve.Kelso@kentcountymi.gov

West Nile Virus Confirmed in Two Human Cases

Grand Rapids –The Kent County Health Department is reporting two human cases of West Nile Virus. The two people who have tested positive are unrelated adults who are residents of Kent County. It is unknown where they contracted the disease.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is spread to people primarily through the bites of an infected *Culex* species mosquito. While this species is known to transmit WNV it is not known to transmit Zika virus. WNV is not contagious from person to person. |

WNV symptoms range from a slight headache and low grade fever to, in rare cases, swelling of the brain tissue. WNV can result in death.

For three months, ending on Labor Day, KCHD conducted weekly surveillance of *Culex* mosquitoes, testing for the presence of WNV. Tens of thousands of mosquitoes were collected from various areas of the county. WNV testing was performed on the liquefied remains of up to 50 mosquitoes at a time. WNV was found in 20 of those samples.

“We have known through our testing that the threat for contracting West Nile Virus was in our community,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer at KCHD, “We also know that the threat will continue as long as mosquitoes are active. Even the first frost may not be harsh enough to extinguish the risk.”

West Nile Virus was first detected in the United States in 1999. Since the first case was diagnosed in Michigan in 2001 more than 1100 people have been diagnosed with the disease. 92 people have died. In 2001 and again in 2012 Kent County had the second highest number of West Nile cases in the state. More about West Nile Virus can be found [here](#).

The best treatment for WNV is prevention. The Kent County Health Department recommends wearing a mosquito repellent that contains 10 – 35% DEET, wearing light colored clothing and staying indoors during dusk. You can help stop mosquitoes from breeding by removing any standing water in your yard and keeping your lawn and shrubs cut.

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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 265 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 three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503