



For Immediate Release
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Illinois Reports First Human Case of West Nile Virus

Illinois Poison Center experts remind Illinois residents to take precautions

(Chicago) – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced yesterday that Illinois' first human case of West Nile Virus has been confirmed. With this newly reported information, Illinois Poison Center experts strongly urge residents to take steps to prevent the disease.

"Although this is only the first human case reported in Illinois this year, mosquitoes and birds in many Illinois counties have tested positive for West Nile Virus," said Dr. Michael Wahl, administrative medical director, IPC. "That means the threat of more human cases is real. People need to protect themselves and their families from the disease."

West Nile Virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. One of the ways to prevent West Nile Virus is to use an insect repellent with no more than 30 percent DEET. Such products are safe for use on individuals as young as 2 months of age.

Mosquitoes are attracted to the moisture, warmth, carbon dioxide and odor produced by humans. The insect will readily find and bite any area of untreated skin. DEET blocks the receptors on mosquitoes' antennae that are attracted to these traits. Higher concentrations of DEET do not necessarily provide more protection, but instead provide longer periods of protection. For example, a product containing a 5 percent concentration of DEET will afford about 90 minutes of protection from mosquito bites, and a repellent with a 24 percent DEET concentration will provide approximately five to six hours of protection. The IPC recommends choosing a product with the lowest concentration of DEET effective for the amount of time someone plans to spend outdoors.

Other prevention techniques include:

- Wearing clothing that will cover as much skin as possible when outdoors;
- Applying insect repellent only to exposed skin or clothing or both. Do not apply repellents underneath clothing;
- Following the directions on the label of insect repellents;
- Washing your hands after using insect repellents and pesticides;
- Emptying or draining any standing water around your house and yard;
- Avoiding being outside during evening and early morning hours; and

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- Installing or repairing window and door screens.

The IPC handles calls on mosquito bites, insect stings and much more. If you suspect a bite from an infected mosquito or any other poisoning emergency, call the Illinois Poison Center immediately at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment recommendations. For a free, complete list of DEET-related safety tips, Illinois residents can contact the IPC at 1-800-222-1222 or visit the IPC's Web site at www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org.

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The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is the only certified, regional poison center in Illinois, serving more than 12 million residents in 102 counties – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222.

Calling the toll-free hot line will connect callers with their designated local poison center at any time from anywhere in the United States ; all calls placed in Illinois are routed to the IPC. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice to the public and health care professionals on alcohol or drug misuse, medication problems, bites and stings, occupational accidents and other poisonings.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association of more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services.

Editor's Note: Illinois Poison Center experts are available for media interviews. Please contact Robin Antognoli at 312/906-6146 or rantogno@ilpoison.org to schedule an interview.