



Press Release

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Fight the Bite Cook County campaign to prevent West Nile and Zika viruses launches today

Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials are encouraging residents to Fight the Bite Cook County to protect against diseases spread by mosquitoes – like West Nile and Zika viruses. Fight the Bite Cook County television commercials airing today on CBS/WBBM-TV Chicago encourage residents to:

Practice the 3 R's to prevent mosquitoes from breeding and biting:

- **Remove** – Eliminate opportunities for mosquitoes to breed outside your home. Once a week, dump water that is collecting outside in buckets, flowerpots, toys, kiddie pools, pet bowls, spare tires, etc. Keep gutters clean and free of debris.
- **Repel** – Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents when outdoors. Always follow the directions on the label. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Use air conditioning when possible.
- **Repair** – Keep mosquitoes outside. Make sure your doors and windows have tightly fitting screens. Repair any tears or other openings.

Learn more about diseases carried by mosquitoes:

West Nile Virus

Most of the time WNV symptoms are mild, but in rare cases, it can cause severe illness including encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord), or even death. Anyone can get WNV, but those at greatest risk are people ages 50 and older, with compromised immune systems, or that spend a lot of time outdoors.

“August is when we typically start to see our first human cases of WNV and more and more traps indicating WNV-positive mosquitoes throughout suburban Cook,” says Chief Operating Officer Dr. Terry Mason, MD. “I hope people will visit fightthebitecookcounty.com to see where WNV is currently circulating in mosquitoes and to watch the video of Evergreen Park Mayor James Sexton talking about how West Nile virus affected him. It really shows why prevention is important.”

Zika Virus

Similar to WNV, many people infected with Zika virus won't have symptoms or will only have mild symptoms. However, because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a birth defect of the brain called microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a travel alert for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. On July 29, 2016, CDC confirmed cases of local transmission of Zika virus in Florida. Special precautions for pregnant women and their partners are recommended due to reports of microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes. The mosquitoes that carry Zika virus do not thrive in suburban Cook County, so at the present time, local transmission is considered unlikely. CCDPH is urging women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant (and their partners) to learn more about CDC's recommendations to:

- Delay travel to Zika-affected areas
- Prevent sexual transmission
- Avoid mosquito bites.

Learn more at fightthebitecookcounty.com, follow us on Twitter (CookCoHealth) and like us on Facebook (CCDPH).

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