

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

Umair A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director

Tele: (713) 439-6000
Fax: (713) 439-6080

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sandy Kachur
713.439.6292

Martha Marquez
713.439.6193

HCPHES Confirms First West Nile Virus Human Case of the Season

Take Precautions to Protect Yourself and Your Family

Houston, Texas (May 21, 2015) - Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES) has confirmed the first human case of the 2015 season of West Nile Virus (WNV) illness in Harris County, and in the state of Texas.

West Nile Virus was confirmed in an elderly patient from the northwest portion of Harris County. The patient, whose identity will remain confidential, is expected to recover.

Dr. Umair A. Shah, Executive Director of HCPHES says, "This first human case of WNV confirmed in our community is a good reminder that we need to take personal protective measures. The best way to protect yourself from mosquito-borne disease is by using an insect repellent when you go outdoors."

West Nile Virus season typically runs from June through October. In 2014, there were 61 human cases of West Nile Virus illness in Harris County (excluding the City of Houston), including one WNV-related death.

"Our mosquito surveillance program is key to identifying the presence of WNV in our community and it guides our efforts to help us better protect our residents. We have intensified the monitoring of the 268 mosquito traps throughout the county," says Dr. Mustapha Debboun, Director of HCPHES Mosquito Control.

As we move into the summer months, enjoy the outdoors but remember to protect yourself and your family from mosquito-borne disease.

Mosquito-Proof Your Property

- Don't "feed" the storm drains. Sweep up lawn clippings, leaves and tree limbs.
- Remove/empty containers that can hold water such as tires, flowerpots and toys.
- Change water in birdbaths and pet water bowls every 3 to 5 days.
- Keep rain gutters free of debris.

- Make sure screens are in good condition.

Personal Protection

- When outdoors, use an insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 and apply as directed on the label.
- If possible, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk on because this is when the primary mosquito (*Culex*) that transmits West Nile Virus is most active.

Most people who are infected with West Nile Virus show no or only mild symptoms such as: low grade fever, muscle aches, and headache. More severe signs and symptoms can include: high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, encephalitis, and rarely, death. If you think you have been infected with West Nile Virus, contact your health care provider.

For more information about West Nile Virus, please visit our website at www.hcphe.org.



Fifty Years of Fighting the Bite:
Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow

HCPHES is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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