



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CALIFORNIA SEES FIRST CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS

Local health officials on alert; residents encouraged to take precautions

The West Nile virus still has not been detected in the San Diego area, however state health officials announced today that there is a probable case of the virus in Los Angeles County.

"I want to remind residents that the virus sickens fewer than one percent of those bitten by an infected mosquito," said Dr. Nancy Bowen, acting public health officer for the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency. "Most individuals exhibit mild symptoms and recover without treatment."

Only about one in 150 infected people exhibit severe symptoms, and those who do are usually elderly or have weakened immune systems.

San Diego County health officials have spread the word about the probable Los Angeles case through the Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN), which rapidly updates area physicians and other health care professionals about possible medical concerns.

Mild symptoms of the virus include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of severe infection (West Nile encephalitis, meningitis, and meningoencephalitis) include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis.

A West Nile Virus Working Group has been convened with top county and state officials that will construct various scenarios and develop possible responses that are efficient and effective.

"The issues associated with the West Nile virus are very complicated and require the knowledge, skills and expertise of many public health disciplines," said Gary Erbeck, director of the county Department of Environmental Health. "The working group that we have assembled reflects the diversity of scientific knowledge necessary to protect residents and visitors in San Diego County."

(more)



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San Diego County Vector Control staff treat mosquito-breeding areas located on public land. They also provide mosquito abatement advice to the public and encourage preventive measures on private property to include:

- Eliminate standing water in flowerpots, discarded tires, boats, etc.
- Keep swimming pools clean, wash out pet dishes regularly, change water in horse troughs and bird baths weekly, stop leaks in irrigation/sprinkler systems, and don't over water lawns.
- In addition, mosquito-eating fish (gambusia) are available free to public for their backyard ponds and may be obtained by calling (858-694-2888).

People can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when you're outdoors in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. To learn more about applying repellent, see [Insect Repellent Use and Safety](#) in the [Questions and Answers](#) pages at www.cdc.gov. Also see [Using Insect Repellent Safely](#) from the EPA at www.epa.gov/pesticides.
- When possible, wear long-sleeved clothes and long pants treated with repellents containing permethrin or DEET since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to exposed skin. If you spray your clothing, there is no need to spray repellent containing DEET on the skin under your clothing.
- Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Keep infants indoors during peak mosquito hours.
- When outside, cover cribs, bassinets or playpens with suspended mosquito netting.

Current information on West Nile virus is also available on the County Web site

www.co.san-diego.ca.us

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