



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First West Nile Virus Case Reported in Custer County

The state's first case of West Nile virus (WNV) has been reported in a human, within weeks after finding the virus in mosquito samples. With an increase in reports nationally, health officials at the Lewis & Clark City County Health Department are cautioning people about the virus and how to minimize mosquito bites. This advice is timely: since 2002, when WNV was first reported in Montana, over 90 percent of cases have been reported in August and September.

As of August 1, 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports 241 WNV cases, including 4 deaths. Montana's first case of the season has been reported from Custer County in Montana.

"The best way to prevent West Nile virus is to prevent mosquito bites," said Laurel Riek, Environmental Health Specialist for Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department. "The more time you spend outdoors recreating or working, the higher chance you have of being bitten by an infected mosquito. Your best defense is to prevent the bite."

Some ways to help prevent mosquito bites are:

- Make sure you have screen protection on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient and follow the directions on the package.
- Mosquito activity may increase at dusk and dawn. Use repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or stay in a mosquito protected area.

WNV infection develops in about 3 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. About 80% of persons infected with WNV experience no symptoms. Up to 20% of persons develop a mild illness, called West Nile fever, which usually lasts a few days. For some, West Nile fever can last for several

weeks. Symptoms include headache, muscle aches, and low grade fever that resolves without any treatment.

About 1 in 150 infected persons develop dangerous brain infections such as encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of these diseases might include headache, rash, high fever, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, tremors, convulsions, coma and paralysis. Individuals who develop any of these symptoms should see their healthcare provider immediately.

Removing mosquito breeding areas is another way to help to prevent being exposed to West Nile virus. The health department recommends these important prevention steps to take around your home and to protect yourself.

Eliminate Mosquito breeding areas:

- Empty standing water from flower pots, buckets, and barrels.
- Change the water in pet dishes and in bird baths daily.
- Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out.
- Empty children's wading pools and store in a position to prevent water accumulation when they aren't being used.
- If standing water cannot be removed, add mosquito-killing products labeled for elimination of mosquito larvae.

For more information go <http://www.co.lewis-clark.mt.us/health/diseases-conditions.html>.

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The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.