



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

Contact: Susan Ringler-Cerniglia, MPH
Public Information Officer
Washtenaw County Health Department
ringlers@washtenaw.org
734-544-6759 or cell 734-678-7010

Fight the Bite! Prevent Mosquito-Borne Illness

Jamestown Canyon and West Nile viruses detected in local mosquitoes

YPSILANTI, Mich., July 21, 2023 – Washtenaw County Health Department reminds local residents to prevent mosquito bites. Mosquitoes collected in Washtenaw County last week have tested positive for Jamestown Canyon virus and West Nile virus. A total of four samples tested positive: three for Jamestown Canyon virus and one for West Nile virus. These collection sites are spread across the county (Ann Arbor, Independence Lake County Park in Whitmore Lake, Pinckney Recreation Area, and Ypsilanti). No human cases of either virus have been reported. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid mosquito bites.

“Unfortunately, mosquitoes can spread disease,” says Juan Luis Marquez, MD, MPH, medical director with Washtenaw County Health Department. “These results confirm the potential for human infections in our local area, and we should all take steps to prevent getting mosquito bites.”

Most people infected with either of Jamestown Canyon or West Nile do not become ill or experience only mild illness. In rare cases, infections can become serious. The Health Department does not recommend avoiding the outdoors but urges precautions. Use appropriate repellent, wear protective clothing, and avoid areas with mosquito activity, whenever possible.

“Our mosquito surveillance can help with early detection of infections,” says Kristen Schweighoefer, MPH, RS, environmental health director with the Washtenaw County Health Department. “We’ll continue to monitor throughout the summer while mosquitoes are active.”

Jamestown Canyon Virus (JCV)

In 2021, six human cases of JCV were reported in Michigan and one in 2022. None of these were in Washtenaw County residents.

The JCV virus is spread to people through bites from infected mosquitoes. Most cases occur from late spring through mid-fall. Illness can develop within a few days to two weeks following a bite from an infected mosquito. While most people do not become ill, initial symptoms can include fever, headache, and fatigue. In rare cases, it can cause severe disease in the brain and/or spinal cord including encephalitis and meningitis.

While the JCV is found throughout much of the U.S., cases have been increasing in the Midwest. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), this likely reflects increased awareness and testing but may also be due to an increase in the presence of the virus in the environment. This is the third year that the MDHHS has offered virus testing of mosquito pools

Washtenaw County Health Department
555 Towner Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: 734-544-6700 • Fax: 734-544-6705
washtenaw.org/health



Environmental Health Division
705 N Zeeb Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: 734-222-3800 • Fax: 734-222-3930
washtenaw.org/envhealth

collected by local health departments and county mosquito control programs. This testing program identified the positive results in Washtenaw.

West Nile Virus (WNV)

In Michigan last year, 12 human cases of WNV were reported. Washtenaw County has not had a human case of WNV reported since 2018.

Most people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms of illness, but some may become ill 3 to 15 days after the bite from an infected mosquito. About 1 in 4 people infected will experience mild illness with fever, headache, and body aches, sometimes with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands.

Less than 1% of people who get bitten and become infected with West Nile virus will develop a severe illness like encephalitis or meningitis. The risk of getting West Nile encephalitis is higher in persons 50 years of age or older. More severe infection may be marked by convulsions, disorientation, headache, high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, or paralysis. In a few cases, mostly among the elderly, death may occur.

Prevention

Avoiding mosquito bites is the best way to prevent mosquito-borne diseases.

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET or other [EPA-approved](#) products to exposed skin or clothing. Follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, kiddie pools, and other water-holding containers where mosquitoes can lay eggs.

Resource links

- Environmental Protection Agency's [Insect Repellent Search Tool](#)
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases
- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development's [list of licensed pesticide control businesses](#)
- Washtenaw County Health Department [mosquito-related illnesses](#)

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at www.washtenaw.org/health. The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.