



**For Immediate Release:** 08.25.06

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### **Oak Park Resident Diagnosed with West Nile Virus**

With an Oak Park resident among the latest group of Illinoisans to be positively diagnosed with West Nile Virus, public health officials are urging residents to make sure taking steps to prevent being bitten by an infected mosquito is among their weekend plans.

The Oak Park resident was among five new area cases announced Thursday by the Cook County Health Department. Other cases were reported in Mt. Prospect, Arlington Heights, Des Plaines and Palatine. Cases also have been identified in Rosemont, Chicago Heights, Willow Springs and Evergreen Park.

"West Nile Virus is here in our community," said Oak Park Department of Public Health Director Georgeen Polyak, PhD. "We have been taking steps to reduce the mosquito population since spring, but at this point individual vigilance is the key to prevention.

"Everyone needs to take steps to reduce the chances of being bitten. This means avoiding the outdoors when mosquitoes are most active and covering as much exposed skin as possible. It also means using repellent and checking your home for places where mosquitoes can get inside and making repairs promptly."

Additional spraying by the Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District also is likely in the weeks ahead if virus levels remain high, Dr. Polyak said.

"Spraying to kill adult mosquitoes is the control tool of last resort, but that is exactly where we are right now," she said. "Weather conditions have spawned a bumper crop of disease-carrying mosquitoes and we need to use every tool in our arsenal to combat them."

Only about two persons out of 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness, officials say. Illness from West Nile disease is usually mild and includes fever, headache and body aches, but serious illness, such as encephalitis and meningitis, and death are possible. Persons older than 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease and prolonged recovery periods. Nearly 800 people have died from the disease in the last seven years.

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### West Nile Virus in Oak Park

To reduce the risk of West Nile illness and other mosquito-borne diseases, public health officials recommend taking these precautions:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. The absence of swarms of nuisance mosquitoes doesn't mean the virus-carrying mosquitoes aren't present
- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles.

For more information on West Nile Virus, contact the Oak Park Department of Public Health at 708.358.5694, email [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us) or visit [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us). Information also is posted on several websites, including the Illinois Department of Public Health [www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us) and Centers for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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