



For Immediate Release: September 22, 2017

Media Contact:

Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281

Health Department Confirms Year's First Human Case of West Nile Virus

BURLINGTON – Vermont health officials have confirmed the year's first case of human illness due to West Nile virus. An Addison County resident was diagnosed earlier this month with neuroinvasive disease – a more serious form of the illness which affects the nervous system.

West Nile virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus has been found in all counties of Vermont and continues to be detected in mosquitoes each year. Most people who are infected do not become ill, but around 20 percent develop flu-like symptoms such as high fever, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. Fewer than 1 percent develop the more severe illness.

Since 2003, there have been 12 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus in Vermont. Two Windsor County residents were diagnosed with West Nile neuroinvasive disease in 2016. There have been no confirmed human cases of Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) this year. Each year, the Health Department and Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets conduct [mosquito surveillance](#) throughout the state, testing for West Nile virus and EEE.

Health officials said the risk of illness is highest in late summer and early fall, continuing until the first hard frost, and are encouraging Vermonters to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

“Our surveillance has found mosquitoes infected with West Nile virus in all parts of the state,” said Bradley Tompkins, infectious disease epidemiologist with the Vermont Department of Health. “Mosquito-borne diseases can be serious and sometimes fatal. It’s important for people to protect themselves from bites.”

Here are steps you can take to prevent mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors
- Limit the amount of time you spend outdoors at dawn and dusk
- Use EPA-registered insect repellent labeled as effective against mosquitoes
- Cover baby carriages or outdoor playpens with mosquito netting

- Fix holes in your screens. Make sure they are tightly attached to doors and windows
- Mosquitoes breed in standing water. Drain areas where water can pool, such as rain gutters, wading pools and old tires

For more information about West Nile virus and preventing mosquito bites, visit healthvermont.gov/mosquito

For health news, alerts and information, visit healthvermont.gov

Join us on [Facebook](#)

Follow us on [Twitter](#)

###