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West Nile virus risk is up

[TWIN CITIES, Thursday, August 29, 2013] West Nile virus risk is increasing this week even as mosquito numbers drop, according to the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District (MMCD).

Several recent samples of mosquitoes collected by MMCD as part of its annual metro-area West Nile virus risk reduction program, have tested positive for the virus, and the Minnesota Department of Health continues to track a state-wide increase in human cases of West Nile illness in 2013.

Here are the current West Nile virus case numbers:

[Minnesota Department of Health West Nile virus cases by county](#)

[West Nile virus national maps and statistics from the CDC](#)

Minnesotans enjoying outdoor activities during this warm, dry period should continue to pack and use mosquito repellent – even if mosquito levels seem tolerable.

While most mosquitoes don't carry West Nile virus, the species that do are often more abundant late in the summer. Since West Nile transmitting mosquitoes mainly bite birds, they aren't as noticeable as mosquitoes that prefer to bite people. Once a mosquito bites an infected bird, it can then transmit West Nile virus to a person or a horse the next time it feeds. Risk of West Nile illness typically increases late in the season and will continue until the first hard frost.

“West Nile risk typically peaks near the end of August in Minnesota, and because surveillance has recently detected an uptick in disease bearing species it is especially

important that we continue to take common sense precautions to avoid mosquito bites” said Kirk Johnson, MMCD vector ecologist.

Here’s how you can help reduce your risk for West Nile virus:

- Check yards and neighborhoods for water-holding containers and recycle or dump them out (it can take less than a week for mosquitoes to develop in standing water),
- Make sure window screens are in good repair
- Wear long-sleeved, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing
- Use mosquito repellent (carefully follow label directions)
- Whenever possible, avoid prolonged outdoor activity at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

Not all mosquitoes carry the virus, and most people who are exposed to West Nile don’t get sick. While anyone can develop West Nile illness, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems are at greater risk and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/westnile/wnvmap13.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/statsMaps/preliminaryMapsData/incidencestatedate.html>