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Fight the bite!

Be on the lookout for areas of standing water in your yard

With the torrential rains we've been seeing recently, residents may soon see a bumper crop of mosquitoes. These mosquitoes are aptly nicknamed "nuisance mosquitoes," or "floodwater mosquitoes." It is important to remember this species, while bothersome, typically does not carry West Nile virus.

In hot, dry weather, the Culex mosquito, the species that does carry West Nile virus, breeds in stagnant water, like street catch basins and ditches, clogged downspouts, bird baths, old tires, and multiply rapidly. Following the heavy rains like the ones we've experienced recently, it is a good time to inspect your home and yard for sources of standing water where these mosquitoes are likely to breed.

West Nile virus transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about two persons out of 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Illness from West Nile 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.

Fight the Bite! The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness such as Zika virus, is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. Use prevention methods whenever mosquitoes are 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.

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- Change water in birdbaths weekly. Properly maintain wading pools and stock ornamental ponds with fish. Cover rain barrels with 16-mesh wire screen. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

For resources on what do before, during and after a flood, please visit the Kane County Office of Emergency Management's Web site at <http://www.kcoem.org/> or the Health Department's site at http://kanehealth.com/natural_disasters.htm.

For additional information on West Nile, please visit http://kanehealth.com/wnv_surveillance.htm to view a map of the Health Department's trap locations throughout the county. You can view more detailed monitoring results from this and previous years by visiting http://kanehealth.com/west_nile.htm. You can also visit the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm. People also can call the IDPH West Nile Virus Hotline at (866) 369-9710 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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