

## **Residents Urged to Take High West Nile Virus Risk Seriously**

*August 2008*

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Another summer, just another West Nile virus warning, right? That's what some residents may be thinking, but vector control officials warn the mosquito-transmitted disease remains a major threat to public health, especially this year. With nearly 200 dead birds, 286 mosquito samples, and 28 human cases confirmed positive for West Nile virus in Los Angeles County so far this year, the Southern California region is facing resurgence in virus activity comparable to the 2004 epidemic. Don't think that because the kids are packing up their lunch boxes and heading back to school it means the mosquito season is at its end. The number of West Nile virus cases in the Southland has traditionally increased in the ending summer months and early Fall. In recent years, West Nile virus transmission has occurred year-round, making prevention that much more important.

By now, most L.A. residents can recite the familiar tips and precautions to avoid mosquito bites and reduce the risk of West Nile virus transmission.

- Wear insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or other active ingredients approved by the Center for Disease Control.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors to reduce the risk of skin exposure.
- Avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Dump and drain any standing water around your property to eliminate potential mosquito breeding sources.
- Request FREE mosquitofish from your local vector control district for placement in out-of-order swimming pools, spas, and ponds to control mosquitoes.
- Report any mosquito activity near vacant or foreclosed homes and abandoned swimming pools in your neighborhood.

However, it is not enough to simply be familiar with the warnings and precautions. West Nile virus is now endemic to the region and will remain a threat whenever the proper weather and ecological conditions are present. Each individual resident must be proactive in preventing the spread of the disease. Residents are encouraged to actively change their day-to-day behaviors for the sake of public health and safety. Similar to buckling a safety belt when entering an automobile or washing your hands before you eat, West Nile virus prevention must become second nature.

West Nile virus can be transmitted to humans and other animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, and/or a skin rash. These symptoms can last for several weeks or months. Severe cases can result in paralysis, coma, and even death.

The public is encouraged to report dead birds to help with West Nile virus surveillance and control efforts, as birds play an important role in maintaining and spreading the virus. The CA Department of Public Health's toll-free hotline is 877-WNV BIRD or visit on-line at: [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov).

For more information, call the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District at (562)944-9656 or visit [www.glacvcd.org](http://www.glacvcd.org).