August 16, 2019

West Nile Virus (WNV) has been detected in Newton mosquitoes, the City’s Health & Human Services Department announced today. There have been no reports of human infection in Massachusetts so far this year.

Mosquitoes carrying the virus have been trapped in Newton and surrounding areas, so residents should take precautions regardless of which part of Newton they live in.

“West Nile Virus mosquitoes are something we expect to see every summer and fall in this area,” said Deborah Youngblood, Health and Human Services Commissioner. “I urge everyone to take steps to prevent disease by using mosquito repellent, avoiding the outdoors during peak mosquito times, and emptying standing water around their homes.”

WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquitoes that carry this virus are common throughout the state, and are found in urban as well as more rural areas. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe infection. Newton residents have contracted the illness in previous years, and some of them have been hospitalized.

“Most people who get West Nile Virus have a mild flu-like illness or do not experience symptoms at all,” Youngblood said. “But it can cause severe disease, including high fever, headache, stiff neck and even disorientation or coma in some people.”

Newton’s efforts to address mosquito-borne illness are to treat catch basins where mosquitoes carrying WNV develop and to regularly trap and test mosquitoes to monitor the presence of WNV in the community. Newton participates in the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project. There are no plans to spray for mosquitoes in Newton.

By taking a few, common-sense precautions, people can help to protect themselves and their loved ones:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient (DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535) according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.
Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

Drain Standing Water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change the water in birdbaths frequently.

Install or Repair Screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

Information about WNV and reports of current and historical WNV virus activity in Massachusetts can be found on the MDPH website at http://www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito