

# County of Santa Clara

## Public Health Department

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## **Santa Clara County Announces First Human Case of West Nile Virus**

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA - A 34-year old Santa Clara County woman has been confirmed as the county's first case of West Nile virus in 2005, Deputy Health Officer Sara Cody, M.D. announced today. The woman reported to Public Health Officials that her mosquito bites were most likely acquired in the Sacramento area. She has fully recovered and has resumed her normal activities. The woman became ill in mid-July and was never hospitalized. After becoming ill with fever, headache and body aches, laboratory tests confirmed that she had West Nile virus.

"West Nile virus is a fact of life now for all Californians," Cody said. "Although this person most likely acquired her infection outside of Santa Clara County, we have had evidence of West Nile Virus activity in Santa Clara County for several months. Everyone needs to take precautions, including emptying standing water and avoiding contact with mosquitoes as much as possible."

West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus is not transmitted person-to-person. State and local public health officials have been conducting an expanded surveillance program for West Nile virus since 2000, searching for evidence of infection in people, mosquitoes, birds and other animals.

The virus, which can cause encephalitis, was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999 and has been found in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Most individuals who are infected with West Nile virus have only mild symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches. However, the virus can cause severe symptoms in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune systems.

Cody emphasized that the risk of any individual becoming ill from the bite of a mosquito infected with West Nile virus is very low. Less than 1 percent of the bites from infected mosquitoes cause severe disease. The risk of disease is higher for individuals 50 years of age and older.

Individuals can further reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Drain standing water weekly in places where mosquitoes lay eggs. Check flowerpots, buckets, toys, leaky water faucets, clogged rain gutters, bird baths and kiddie pools.
- Check the screens on your DOORS and windows to make sure they have tight-fitting screens. Repairs any holes or rips so mosquitoes cannot get into your home.
- Limit outdoor activities and take precautions to prevent mosquito bites and DAWN & DUSK when they are most active.
- Apply long-lasting insect repellent with the ingredient DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) or Picaridan (KBR 3023) according to the label's instructions. Oil of lemon eucalyptus (p-menthane-3,8-diol or PMD) is another alternative that provides protection similar to repellents with low concentrations of DEET against mosquitoes found in the United States

Many species of birds get infected and die from West Nile virus. The public can play a part of the California Department of Health Services' (CDHS) extensive monitoring effort for the virus by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies and jays that have been dead for less than 24 hours. CDHS has established a toll-free line - 877-WNV-BIRD - for public reporting. In addition, the Santa Clara County Vector Control District is taking reports of standing water that may be sources of mosquito breeding places such as abandoned pools or water gardens.

Additional information about West Nile virus in California can be found at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov), [www.cdc.gov/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile) , [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org) and [www.sccvector.org](http://www.sccvector.org)