



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc
Commissioner

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, September 13, 2021**

REDUCE EXPOSURE TO MOSQUITOES – RECORD LEVEL OF MOSQUITO ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO BE OBSERVED

Nine cases of West Nile virus disease have been identified in humans so far this season

West Nile virus season usually lasts until October

*The Health Department has identified a record-breaking 1,039
positive mosquito pools this season*

September 13, 2021 – The Health Department today reminded all New Yorkers to continue to protect themselves against mosquitoes and West Nile virus. Mosquitoes are active in New York City from April through October. So far this season, 9 cases of West Nile virus disease have been identified in New Yorkers, 4 from the Bronx, 2 from Queens, 1 each from Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island. The amount of West Nile virus activity varies every year. To date, a record-breaking 1,039 West Nile virus-positive mosquito pools—mosquitoes gathered from the same trap site and tested together for the virus—have been identified. On average, the Health Department identifies 309 positive mosquito pools each season. Previously, 2018 was noted as a record with 1,024 positive pools for the entire mosquito season. This year’s warm, wet weather may be contributing to these higher counts.

“While the end of summer is around the corner, we want all New Yorkers to be aware that mosquitoes are still active and we’ve seen record numbers of activity this season,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “When outdoors, make sure you wear insect repellent and remove standing water from your property. If you observe standing water not on your property, please report it to 311.”

The West Nile virus was first detected in New York City 22 years ago. Since 1999, the number of human cases has ranged from 3 to 47 annually. Of the 359 West Nile virus neuroinvasive disease cases reported through last year, 47 (13%) died due to their infection. New York City has over 40 species of mosquitoes, but West Nile virus is transmitted primarily by several *Culex* species, including *Culex salinarius* and *Culex pipiens*.

The Health Department has successfully helped control mosquito-borne diseases since the West Nile virus was first detected in NYC. The Department uses a comprehensive, integrated pest management approach to prevent and control mosquitoes which can transmit West Nile virus.

This includes reducing standing water where mosquitoes can lay their eggs, applying larvicide in bodies of standing water that cannot be drained such as catch basins and marshland, and spraying pesticides to target adult mosquitoes where persistent West Nile virus activity is detected. The Agency's data-driven approach relies on mosquito trapping and testing to determine where in the city to apply larvicides or other pesticides

There are more than 50 permanent mosquito surveillance trap sites citywide, and the Health Department installs additional mosquito traps around affected areas to enhance mosquito surveillance. There are currently 106 surveillance traps in the five boroughs. The Health Department is treating catch basins with larvicide and has already conducted three aerial applications of larvicide in the marsh areas of Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. The agency has conducted 21 spray operations to control adult mosquitoes so far this season.

West Nile virus infection can cause a mild or moderate febrile illness; and most (80%) of those infected have no symptoms at all. In some people, particularly those 50 and older or who have weakened immune systems, West Nile virus can cause a serious and potentially fatal infection of the brain and spinal cord. The most common symptoms are headache, fever, muscle aches, and extreme fatigue. Symptoms of more severe illness can also include changes in mental status and muscle weakness requiring hospitalization. Most patients who are infected with WNV will go on to fully recover from their illness. However, some continue to have problems months after infection. If a person has symptoms of West Nile virus, they should contact or see their doctor.

Most New Yorkers diagnosed with West Nile virus report they did not use repellent or take other precautions to [prevent a mosquito bite](#). Remember to obtain repellent for yourself, and also offer to get it for your older neighbors or relatives. For information about which repellent is best for you, visit the [EPA site](#) to search by product and duration of effectiveness.

Every year, as a part of normal outreach, the Health Department also conducts 80 to 90 presentations to educate communities about mosquito-borne illnesses. You can [request community presentations on West Nile virus and other health topics](#).

Reducing Exposure to Mosquitoes

- Use an approved insect repellent containing picaridin, DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus (not for children under three), or products that contain the active ingredient IR3535. Visit the [EPA site](#) to search by product and duration of effectiveness.
- Make sure windows have screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate any standing water from your property and dispose of containers that can collect water. Standing water is a violation of the New York City Health Code.
- Make sure roof gutters are clean and drained properly.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs. Keep them empty or covered if not in use. Drain water that collects in pool covers.

For more information about West Nile virus, or to report standing water, visit nyc.gov/health/wnv or call 311.

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