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Cabell Huntington Health Department Encourages Ways to Prevent West Nile Virus

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West Nile Virus Prevention

HUNTINGTON, WV – The Cabell-Huntington Health Department would like to remind residents to take precaution while enjoying the outdoors this summer. Mosquito season is upon us and with that comes several mosquito viruses to include West Nile Virus.

West Nile Virus (WNV) commonly presents with no symptoms in people. This virus is very common and people older than 60 years old are more affected. Once a person contracts this virus, it cannot be passed to another person. In the last 5 years, only 3 cases have been documented in West Virginia.

The health department's mosquito surveillance team has been trapping mosquitoes and submitting them to the WV Office of Laboratory Services for viral testing. No West Nile virus has been detected in mosquitoes in Cabell County so far this year and the public will be alerted to its presence if and when it is found. Any complaints of heavy mosquito activity are investigated.

“West Nile Virus, like other mosquito-borne diseases such as Lacrosse encephalitis, can cause symptoms that include a fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or a body rash,” states Michael Kilkenney, Physician Director for the Cabell-Huntington Health Department. While most individuals who have been exposed to WNV may not have any symptoms, Dr. Kilkenney cautions that in some cases, people may develop serious illnesses such as encephalitis or meningitis that can lead to hospitalization, and in rare instances, death. **Fortunately, mosquito bites are largely avoidable.**

The Cabell-Huntington Health Department is urging residents of Cabell County and the City of Huntington to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites that can potentially cause illness by following the “4 Ds”:

- Dress: Wear long sleeves and long pants when outdoors.
- Deter: Always use insect repellants when you go outdoors.
- Dusk: Avoid peak mosquito hours during the day, typically around dawn and dusk.
- Drain: Remove all standing water around your home.

“You can significantly reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home by eliminating potential places for standing water where mosquitoes love to breed, such as: bird baths, tires, flower pots, wading pools, and other containers,” states Karen Hall-Dundas, Director of Environmental Health. “Don’t forget to keep gutters clean and flowing and drill holes into the bottom of recycling or garbage containers to prevent water from stagnating. Make sure to repair or install window and door screens to keep mosquitoes from entering your home. Change out water in bird baths and pet watering bowls weekly and place screening on rain barrels.”

Anyone who has symptoms that cause concern should contact their health care provider, especially if the symptoms are severe; such as, confusion, seizures, and fever with either a stiff neck or muscle weakness

If you need additional information, please contact 304-523-6483 or visit the Cabell-Huntington Health Department website, www.cabellhealth.org or the Centers for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov

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