

Student Health Services

West Nile Virus Health Alert

In recognition of the upcoming Labor Day weekend, we want to share information with our school communities about the West Nile Virus (WNV). We are in the peak of mosquito season, which starts in the summer and continues through fall. Our local health officials are concerned about the West Nile virus and other illnesses spread by mosquitos because we are already seeing an increased number of cases that have been reported across the state. According to health officials, as a result of the heavy rain we have had this year, it has created a lot of standing water and thus the number of mosquitos have increased. Additionally, the Fulton County Board of Health has detected high mosquito activity through their mosquito surveillance and control program. In light of these concerns, we are sharing the following information to stress the importance of protecting yourself and your family against West Nile, especially those at greater risk for serious illness such as the elderly; those with compromised immune systems; people with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease; and people who have received organ transplants.

West Nile is a virus most commonly spread to people by infected mosquito bites. There are no vaccines to prevent or medications to treat WNV in people. Fortunately, most people infected with WNV do not have symptoms. However, 1 in 5 people who are infected develop a fever and other symptoms. West Nile virus can cause febrile illness, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

You can reduce your risk of WNV by adhering to the following preventive measures:

1. **Drain** – containers after every rain, get rid of unnecessary containers. Help reduce the number of mosquitoes by utilizing the Tip-N-Toss principles on all standing water: empty standing water from containers such as flower pots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, cans and bottles, discarded/old tires, children's toys, tarps, gutters and birdbaths.
2. **DEET**- use the appropriate mosquito/insect repellent when you go outdoors which includes repellents containing DEET that are EPA-registered with 20%-30% DEET.
3. **Dress** - wear light-weight long sleeves, pants and socks during the day when many mosquitoes are most active especially if you work or will be outside for long periods of time. Mosquitos tend to bite during the day.
4. **Doors, windows and screens** – make sure doors, windows and screens are in good condition and fit tightly to prevent mosquitos from coming inside and keep doors closed.
5. **Use Mosquito Dunks** (a larvicide used to kill mosquito larvae) to control mosquitos in areas with standing water and in containers that cannot be dumped.
6. **Treatment and care** – if you think a family member might have West Nile virus disease, please consult a healthcare provider for evaluation and diagnosis immediately.

Fulton County Residents may call Fulton County's Board of Health MOSQUITO HOTLINE at 404-613-1303 to report mosquito-related issues to the Environmental Health Department.

Additionally, public health will be focusing on preventing mosquito-transmitted infections by spraying, applying larvicide, mosquito trapping and surveillance in targeted areas and will be initiating a door-to-door educational campaign in some surrounding neighborhoods.

Remember, the most effective way to avoid West Nile virus is to prevent mosquito bites: protect yourself by avoiding mosquitos and using the Tip-N-Toss principles.

Our goal is to help keep students and the school communities healthy by sharing important health information. To learn more about West Nile virus, visit the Centers for Disease Control Prevention website on West Nile virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>.

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Resources:

Centers for Disease Control Prevention: West Nile Virus Update

Fulton County Board of Health – West Nile Update

Fulton County Schools – Student Health Services – Mosquito Control Tips:

<http://www.fultonschools.org/en/divisions/ops/security/Pages/Student-Health-Services.aspx>