



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **West Nile Virus Activity in Kalamazoo County** *Residents urged to protect against mosquito bites*

KALAMAZOO, MI— On June 20, 2019 the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) reported that a Canada Goose was found to have West Nile virus in Kalamazoo County. Additionally, West Nile virus activity for Michigan in 2019 has been confirmed in mosquitoes recently collected in Saginaw and Oakland counties. Residents are reminded that the best way to protect against West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

People who work in outdoor occupations or like to spend time outdoors are at increased risk for West Nile virus infection from mosquito bites. Adults 60 years old and older have the highest risk of severe illness caused by West Nile virus.

Symptoms of West Nile virus include a high fever, confusion, muscles weakness and a severe headache. More serious complications include neurological illnesses, such as meningitis and encephalitis. Last year, there were 104 serious illnesses and nine deaths related to West Nile virus in Michigan. Nationally, there were 2,544 human cases of the virus and 137 deaths reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2018.

“We strongly encourage residents to take precautions such as using insect repellent, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors during the peak mosquito-biting hours which are dusk and dawn,” said Vern Johnson, Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Chief.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people who contract the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. As summer temperatures rise, mosquitoes and the virus develop more quickly so it is important to protect yourself from mosquito bites as the weather warms.

Kalamazoo County Environmental Health wants residents to be aware of sick-acting or dead birds, especially crows and blue jays, as that may be an indication of West Nile virus in a community. Residents can report sick-acting or dead wildlife to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by submitting an [online report](#).

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**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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Currently, the Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Division's vector surveillance program is trapping mosquitoes in five locations throughout the County to identify emergent disease-causing pathogens such as the Zika virus and is working with our state partners to provide seasonal early detection of West Nile virus.

Mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus may breed near people's homes in storm drains, shallow ditches, retention ponds, and unused pools. They will readily come indoors to bite if window and door screens are not maintained.

The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

- Using EPA registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol, and 2-undecanone; follow the product label instructions and reapply as directed.
  - Don't use repellent on children under 2 months old. Instead dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs and cover crib, stroller and baby carrier with mosquito netting.
- Wearing shoes and socks, light-colored long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors.
- Making sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings.
- Using bed nets when sleeping outdoors or in conditions with no window screens.
- Eliminating all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding around your home, including water in bird baths, abandoned swimming pools, wading pools, old tires and any other object holding water once a week.

For more information, visit [Michigan.gov/westnilevirus](https://Michigan.gov/westnilevirus) or [Cdc.gov/westnile](https://Cdc.gov/westnile).

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