



Providing Public Health Inspectional and Nursing Services
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Berkshire County, MA

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Public Health Situation Alert – West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) Positive Mosquitoes Identified Again. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has collected WNV positive mosquitos in Clarksburg, Lanesborough, Pittsfield, and two days ago in Becket. So far there have been no human cases of WNV reported in Massachusetts. With the recent rain, standing water and heat, more mosquitoes are likely soon.

Why is WNV a problem? WNV can cause illness ranging from a mild fever to more serious disease like encephalitis (swelling of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord). It was first identified in the United States in 1999. Between 2001 and 2025, 273 people were reported with WNV infection in Massachusetts. Twenty of these people died.

What are the symptoms? Most people who are infected with WNV (80%) will have no symptoms. A smaller number of people who become infected (20%) will have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands. They may also develop a rash. Less than 1% will develop severe illness including encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of severe illness can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, confusion, tremors, seizures/convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. People older than 50 years of age have a higher risk of developing severe illnesses.

How is WNV transmitted? Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected people cannot transmit the disease to others, except in the rare instances of pregnant or breast-feeding people passing it to their babies, through blood transfusions or organ transplants, or through direct contact with infected body fluids from injured birds.

What precautions should I take? Remove all stagnant/standing water on your property (birdbaths, wading pools, clogged gutters, tires, catch basins, etc.), make sure window and door screens are repaired and tight, avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active (dusk to dawn), use an EPA registered mosquito repellent whenever mosquitos are present, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and socks. Prevention is always the safest strategy. Event organizers and Recreational Camps for Children should keep prevention in mind when scheduling events during peak mosquito season which is now.

Where can I get more information?

[West Nile Virus \(WNV\) | Mass.gov](#)

[Massachusetts arbovirus update | Mass.gov](#)

[Mosquito-borne Diseases | Mass.gov](#)

[West Nile: Causes and How It Spreads | West Nile Virus | CDC](#)

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