



Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-transmitted disease that was first detected in the United States in 1999 in the New York City area. It has been known for several decades to be in other countries across Asia, Africa and southern Europe. The infection was probably brought into the United States by a traveler or an infected bird or mosquito. The virus has been known to be in Michigan since 2001 and is found across the United States.



There were two human cases of WNV in Berrien County in 2006. Both patients were over 70 years old and were exposed to infected mosquitoes in the Galien and Benton Harbor area. Nationwide, in 2006, there were 4,200 WNV human cases reported to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention; 55 of those cases were Michigan residents.

The disease is most serious for the elderly, but people of all ages can be infected and become seriously ill. Symptoms can range from almost none to moderate flu-like symptoms to swelling of the brain in extreme cases.

Symptoms of the West Nile Virus, which are comparable to encephalitis and meningitis, include fever,

headache, stiff neck, weakness and confusion. Doctors say if you have those symptoms three to fifteen days after being bitten by a mosquito you should seek medical attention.

About one in five people infected with the virus will have a mild illness with fever, headache and body aches, sometimes with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. Only about one in 150 infected will develop encephalitis or meningitis.

“We are still recommending all of the common sense precautions to minimize or eliminate exposure to mosquitoes”, said Rick Johansen, M.D., Berrien County Health Department Medical Director.

BATS, BUGS & BACTERIA

The warm humid air of July makes this time of year a high-risk period for bugs and bacteria. The Berrien County Health Department will provide you with information throughout the month on West Nile Virus, foodborne illnesses, rabies, E.Coli and outbreaks. For more information on any of these topics, **please call the health department at 926-7121. Happy Summer!**



AVOIDING MOSQUITOES:

- ◆ Apply insect repellent that contains the active ingredient DEET to exposed skin or clothing (Be sure to follow the manufacturer’s instructions.)
- ◆ Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes out of buildings.
- ◆ Drain puddles in yard, emptying water from mosquito breeding sites such as buckets, troughs, barrels, cans, old tires or similar places mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- ◆ Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active (dusk and dawn.)
- ◆ Wear light colored long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors.

BIRD TESTING

Because the WNV has become so common in Michigan and federal dollars are scarce, the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) will no longer accept dead crows or blue jays for testing. Residents who find these sick or dead birds should visit the BCHD website, www.berriencohlthdept.org, and click on “What’s New,” where there will be a “link” for reporting. People without internet access can call the Health Department at 927-5623. Reporting will allow health department officials to detect an increase in corvid (crows, ravens, blue jays) deaths and educate the public of the increased risk to human health.

For bird testing questions call: 927-5623



**West Nile Cases Nationally, Statewide and Locally
January 1 - December 31, 2006**

Geographic Area	Human Cases	Corvid Cases
United States	4220	2746*
Michigan	55	256
REGION 5		
Allegan Co.	1	5
Barry Co.	1	1
Berrien Co.	2	10
Branch Co.	0	0
Calhoun Co.	0	0
Cass Co.	0	1
Kalamazoo Co.	0	3
St. Joseph Co.	1	3
Van Buren Co.	0	0

*Data as of October 10, 2006

Birds and the West Nile Virus

Certain birds carry the West Nile Virus and can be used as indicators for human danger. Large numbers of deaths among these birds classified as Corvids (crows, ravens and blue jays) can indicate higher risk to humans. Some birds are often mistaken for Corvids including:

- **Red-Winged Blackbird** – Male is black with reddish-orange shoulder stripe.
- **Brown-headed cowbird** – Male has metallic green/black body with brown head.
- **Common Grackle** – Male appears all black, but has iridescent purple head, neck and breast, pale yellow eyes, common throughout Michigan.
- **European Starling** – Black with iridescent green and purple, has white spots on head and body which are most evident during fall.

For more information on WNV: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor	M-139 Office	School Based	Niles	Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

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