WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Williamson County & Cities Health District Says West Nile Virus Risk Can Be Reduced
By Using Caution

The risk of getting a West Nile Virus (WNV) related disease typically increases in late July and August as more mosquitoes begin to feed on people instead of birds. So far, two human cases of West Nile Virus disease are under investigation in Williamson County in 2012. Both cases were reported to the Williamson County and Cities Health District in July. Previously, only five cases of WNV disease have been reported in Williamson County since 2002.

About 1 out of 150 people bitten by WNV infected mosquitoes will develop a central nervous system disease (Encephalitis or Meningitis). Approximately 10 percent of people with this severe form of infection die from their illness and many survivors suffer from long-term nervous system problems. Fortunately, most people bitten by infected mosquitoes develop West Nile Fever, the less severe form of the disease, and fight off the illness without any symptoms. WNV symptoms usually begin 3 to 15 days after being bitten and can include headache, high fever, rash, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, convulsions, paralysis, and coma. All age groups are vulnerable to WNV. However, the elderly or people with weakened immune systems face the highest risk of developing a severe or even fatal illness from a WNV infection.

Residents can protect themselves from mosquitoes by limiting outdoor activities at dusk and dawn, since this is the prime feeding time for WNV carrying mosquitoes. If you go outside, take precautions; wear loose-fitting, long-sleeve shirts, and long pants. Even if mosquito activity seems low; it only takes one bite from an infected mosquito to transmit the virus. All residents should take immediate steps to eliminate the habitats where mosquitoes live and breed:

- Eliminate standing water in wheelbarrows, rain gutters, buckets, plastic covers, toys, or any other container where mosquitoes can breed
- Empty and change the water in pet drinking bowls, bird baths, fountains, wading pools, rain barrels, and potted plant trays every 4 to 5 days to destroy potential mosquito habitats
- Drain or fill temporary pools of water with dirt
- Keep swimming pool water treated and circulating
- Clean out rain gutters
- Remove discarded tires or keep them dry and covered
- Add an aerator to ponds and water gardens or add fish that will eat mosquitoes and larvae
- Remove debris (leaves, twigs, trash) from ditches and low areas
- Fill in ruts and holes that collect standing water
Several safe and effective mosquito repellent options are also available:

- Repellents containing DEET (up to 30 percent concentration) are still the most widely used and can provide long-lasting protection against mosquito bites.
- Permethrin is a strong repellent and will kill mosquitoes that come into contact with treated clothing. Repellents containing permethrin are applied to clothing (not skin). Treated clothing can be worn after the repellent dries.
- Effective alternatives to DEET or permethrin include repellents containing picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535.
- For maximum effectiveness and safety, all mosquito repellents should be used according to label directions.

To report potential mosquito habitats like stagnant water ponds, abandoned swimming pools, or discarded tires call:

- Williamson County & Cities Health District’s Environmental Health Services at (512) 943-3620
- Williamson County Constable, Precinct 3’s Environmental Enforcement Services at (512) 943-3317.

West Nile Virus Information Resources:

Texas Department of State Health Services West Nile Virus News Release:
Texas Department of State Health Services West Nile Information:
http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/arboviral/westnile/information/special/
Annual summaries of West Nile Statistics in Texas:
http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/arboviral/westnile/statistics/annual/default/