

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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## **WEST NILE VIRUS IS CLOSE BY**

*Westchester residents reminded to take precautions against mosquitoes*

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Executive George Latimer recommends residents follow the Health Department’s West Nile Virus prevention advice to avoid mosquito bites by removing standing water after it rains and using repellents.

“Mosquitoes are mostly a nuisance but they can carry diseases, including West Nile Virus,” Latimer said. “To keep mosquitoes from breeding and biting us in our own backyards, once the rain stops, pour out standing water and remove or turn over items such as kiddie pools, wheelbarrows and watering cans.. To keep you and your family safer when spending time outdoors, it’s also a good idea to wear repellents.”

Although there have been no cases of West Nile Virus in New York State as of Aug. 22, the Westchester County Department of Health is highlighting these prevention recommendations now because Rockland, Nassau and Suffolk counties and New York City have identified mosquitoes with West Nile Virus, in a combined 218 batches of mosquitoes. While no mosquitoes in Westchester County have yet tested positive for the virus, out of the 181 batches of mosquitoes tested since June 13, the Health Department expects to find them here soon.

“Given the fact that our neighbors have reported positive mosquitoes, it is safe to assume that mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus are also here in Westchester County,” said Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health. “Rain provides optimal breeding conditions for mosquitoes that can carry the virus. Mosquitoes bite close to where they breed, which is why it’s so important to remove standing water around your home and to use repellents, especially from dawn to dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.”

The Health Department prepared for the mosquito season by educating the public through news releases, flyers, social media and our website. The Health Department also gave 450 pounds of free fathead minnows to residents with ponds to reduce the mosquito population. The minnows reduce the mosquito population by feeding on larvae and pupae before they emerge into adult mosquitoes.

Throughout the season, the Department also traps and tests mosquitoes to track the presence of mosquito-borne viruses in the County. Last year, 10 local batches of mosquitoes had West Nile Virus out of 393 submitted for testing, with the first collected on July 24, and four people were diagnosed with West Nile Virus. In 2017, the

virus was identified in five local mosquito batches out of 380 submitted for testing and three people were diagnosed with West Nile Virus.

West Nile Virus infection most often causes a mild or moderate flu-like illness, but can be more serious particularly for people 60 and older, and those with other health complications.

To reduce the chances for mosquitoes to breed and bite around your home, watch this brief video on the Department of Health website at <http://health.westchestergov.com/west-nile-virus> and follow these tips:

- Avoid the outdoors in the late afternoon and early evening when mosquitoes are active and feeding, and use insect repellents when outdoors during these times. Be sure to follow the instructions on the label.
- Adults can apply insect repellents with up to 30 percent DEET on infants over two months of age by applying the product to their own hands and then rubbing their hands on their children. Products containing DEET are not recommended for use on children under two months of age.
- Wear protective clothing, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and socks, when outdoors, especially in areas where mosquitoes are active and feeding.
- Check around your property for tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that should be discarded or turned over to prevent collecting water.
- Check and remove standing water from children's toys and play houses left outside.
- Remove discarded tires.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are left outdoors.
- Turn over plastic wading pools, buckets and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths at least twice weekly.
- Keep storm drains and gutters clear of leaves and debris.
- Even with the swimming season over, continue to chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor spas and hot tubs until properly winterized or drained for the season. Also, if not chlorinated, drain any water that collects on their covers.

Residents who notice large areas of standing water on public property should report them to the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000.

#### **About Westchester County**

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com)

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