

## **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Follow the 3 R's to Beat West Nile Virus**

**Coldwater, MI.** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency was recently notified by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to expect increased West Nile Virus activity this year due to the number of hot summer days above 90 degrees and the lack of rain. Already, MDHHS has reported mosquitos in Oakland and Macomb counties that are carrying the virus. While no human cases have yet been reported in the state this year, weather conditions are similar to those found in 2002 and 2012, when significant West Nile Virus outbreaks occurred.

“Most people who contract West Nile Virus are symptom free. Usually within 3 to 15 days of infection, about 1 out of 5 people will develop headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting and diarrhea or rash. It's for the 1% that develop the severe neurological symptoms - the inflammation of the brain and/or the surrounding tissues - that we have concerns. There is no way to predict for sure who will develop these severe symptoms” states Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the tri-county Health Department.

While there is no way to predict who is most susceptible to the virus, those over 60 years of age appear to be at the greatest risk for severe disease. Others at risk include individuals who have certain chronic diseases, such as: cancer, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease or people who have received organ transplants. The Health Department cautions anyone who experiences high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, severe headaches, or a stiff neck to see a doctor immediately.

Ms. Burns adds “It is important that we all keep our guard up this time of year and follow basic prevention tips.” The most effective way to prevent becoming infected with WNV is to follow the 3 R’s:

- **Remove** standing water around your home in pet bowls, flower pots, old tires, baby pools and toys and remove leaves and debris from gutters so water doesn’t accumulate. Pools of water that stagnate for three or four days can become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- **Repel** mosquitoes when outdoors between dusk and dawn by applying insect repellent with DEET and wear light, loose fitting clothing.
- **Repair** or replace torn screens on doors and windows.

Following the three R’s will reduce your exposure and that of your family and pets to many of insect-borne diseases transmitted by mosquitos or ticks that are currently in the news. To learn more about West Nile Virus and other insect-borne diseases such as Zika and Lyme Disease, please visit the health department’s web page at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/bhsjwic](http://www.facebook.com/bhsjwic).

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