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Health officials confirm two West Nile cases in Riverside County

A 53-year old man and 43-year old man who both reside in western Riverside County have tested positive for West Nile Virus, said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, county public health officer.

Both individuals were hospitalized and confirmed to have the illness this week. These are the first two confirmed human cases for the 2017 season.

The virus is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes often become infected when they feed on infected birds. Most individuals who are infected with the virus will not experience any illness. Elderly individuals, the very young and those with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk for serious illness.

Health officials emphasized that although hospitals are regularly reminded of the possibility of West Nile virus cases, the risk of serious illness in humans is low.

“West Nile virus is rarely life-threatening, but it can be serious,” Kaiser said. “Fortunately, the virus can only be spread by mosquito bites and there are things you can do to reduce the risk of getting bitten.”

Here are some ways to protect yourself:

- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other protective clothing outside.
- Apply EPA-registered insect repellent that contains DEET.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, such as old tires, buckets, flower pots and toys that can support mosquito breeding.

A comprehensive surveillance program to monitor the virus in Riverside County has been established by the Department of Environmental Health’s Vector Control Program, local mosquito and vector-control districts, and other state and local agencies.

Anyone who becomes ill after exposure to mosquitoes should contact their health care provider. The Disease Control office can be reached at 951.358.5107 for more information on West Nile virus. If you have concerns about mosquitos in your area, contact the local vector control district.