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## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **West Nile Virus Found in Mosquitoes in Washington State** *Personal Protection is Key to Preventing the Illness*

BREMERTON, WA— The State Department of Health issued the attached press release yesterday announcing that the West Nile Virus has been detected in mosquitoes in Washington state for the first time this season.

West Nile Virus (WNV) can be a serious illness for humans, horses, many species of birds, and other animals. Although the risk of getting WNV is very low, anyone can become infected. The most common way that humans get WNV is from the bite of an infected mosquito. Although most mosquitoes in Washington state do not have WNV, the virus was detected in humans, mosquitoes, horses, and birds in five Washington counties last year.

The Kitsap Public Health District wants to remind the public that personal protection is the key to fighting West Nile Virus in Kitsap County. The best ways to prevent nuisance mosquito bites and West Nile Virus is to reduce mosquito breeding habitat around their home, and to avoid biting mosquitoes by doing the following:

- **Reduce or Eliminate Standing Water** around your home or workplace. Most mosquitoes need standing water to lay their eggs and multiply. Clogged gutters, unmaintained animal troughs, boats, tires, buckets, garbage cans, or other items that can hold standing water for more than four days are places where mosquitoes will breed.
- **Make sure that window and door screens are working.** Loose fitting or broken screens are access points for mosquitoes to get into your home when they are looking for a blood meal from people or pets.
- **Avoid known mosquito areas** such as lakes, bogs, wetlands, creek bottoms or dense forests when possible when mosquitoes are present.
- **Avoid being outdoors during the prime mosquito biting hours of dusk and dawn.**
- **Wear protective clothing and use mosquito repellent** when you or your family cannot avoid being outside during the prime biting hours or avoid mosquito-prone areas.
- **Get into and/or stay in good health.** When you eat right and exercise, your body is better able to fight off illness and disease.

*-continued-*

### **Report a Dead Bird**

West Nile virus infects certain wild birds. Of those infected, particular birds – crows, jays, ravens, magpies, and raptors such as hawks and owls – tend to become sick and die. Increasing numbers of dead birds may be an indication of West Nile virus in a community. The public can help by reporting dead crows and other birds from May through October on the State Department of Health's web site:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/WestNileVirus/ReportaDeadBird.aspx>

For additional information about West Nile virus in Washington state, please visit <http://www.doh.wa.gov/wnv>.

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# News Release

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## **Mosquitoes test positive for West Nile virus: year's first are in Franklin Co.**

*Prevent disease by avoiding mosquito bites and making it harder for mosquitoes to reproduce*

**OLYMPIA** — Mosquito samples collected in Franklin County tested positive for West Nile virus. It's the first sign that the virus is active in the state this season since mosquito and dead bird testing began last month. Testing will continue until fall when mosquito season ends.

Most people bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus won't become ill at all, yet some may have mild symptoms including headache and fever that go away without treatment. For some, West Nile virus infection can be very serious, and even fatal. Severe disease may include meningitis or encephalitis. Some neurological effects of the disease may be permanent. People over 50 and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness.

“For a few people who are infected, West Nile virus can be very serious,” said Dr. Kathy Lofy, state health officer. “Most people have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, but it's not worth taking the risk, especially since the illness can be prevented by taking a few simple precautions.”

Avoiding mosquito bites is the key to preventing infection. People who spend time outdoors should use a bug repellent proven to ward-off mosquitoes and should consider wearing long sleeves and pants when mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk.

Dumping standing or stagnant water around homes and businesses reduces the opportunity for mosquitoes to reproduce. Dumping water in wading pools, tires, or old flower pots, and changing water in pet dishes and bird baths at least twice a week can help. Keeping windows and door screens in good condition helps prevent mosquitoes from getting in.

Five counties (Yakima, Spokane, Benton, Franklin, Grant) had mosquito samples that tested positive for the virus [last mosquito year](#). Only one resident of the state became ill from the virus,

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that person was exposed to the virus while traveling outside of Washington. The mosquito season with the most human cases in our state was [2009, when 38 people became ill](#).

[West Nile virus information](#), prevention tips, and [dead bird reporting](#) and testing information is available online.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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