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To: Miami-Dade County Primary Care Providers, Emergency Room Practitioners and Infection Control Professionals

From: Vincent Conte, MD, Deputy Director  
Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control  
Miami-Dade County Health Department

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### **Health Advisory – West Nile Virus**

In August of 2011, a patient came down with symptoms consistent with a viral infection and on further testing, serology done confirmed a recent West Nile Virus infection. The patient was discharged from the hospital and fully recovered. Upon extensive questioning, there is no significant travel history outside of Miami-Dade County preceding his illness or during the incubation period for West Nile Virus. After test results from private labs were confirmed by the State Laboratories, it has been determined that the patient has a case of “Locally Acquired West Nile Virus” from Miami-Dade County.

#### **What Are the Symptoms of WNV?**

- **Serious Symptoms occur in a Few People.** About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.
- **Milder Symptoms occur in Some People.** Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.
- **No Symptoms occur in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

#### **How Does West Nile Virus Spread?**

- **Infected Mosquitoes.** Most often, WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite.
- **Transfusions, Transplants, and Mother-to-Child.** In a very small number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby.



- **Not through touching.** WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

### **How Soon Do Infected People Get Sick?**

People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito.

### **How Is WNV Infection Treated?**

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In cases with milder symptoms, people experience symptoms such as fever and aches that pass on their own, although even healthy people have become sick for several weeks. In more severe cases, people usually need to go to the hospital where they can receive supportive treatment including intravenous fluids, help with breathing and nursing care.

### **What Can People Do to Prevent WNV?**

The easiest and best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an [EPA-registered active ingredient](#). Follow the directions on the package.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

### **Where can I go for more information on West Nile Virus?**

The CDC website has some excellent resources for more information on West Nile Virus at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>. Also you can call the Miami-Dade County Health Department Epidemiology and Disease Control Division at 305-470-5660