

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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Primary Contact
Contact: Kathleen Clary-Cooke, PIO
Phone: 509-460-4214
E-mail: kathleecc@bfhd.wa.gov

Secondary Contact
BFHD Front Desk
509-460-4200

Franklin County Man Has West Nile Virus

First Human Case in Washington State in 2019

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KENNEWICK — A Franklin County man has been diagnosed with the state’s first human case of West Nile virus this year. It’s unknown where the man in his 50s contracted the illness; he lives in Franklin County, but works in Walla Walla County. The man is no longer hospitalized.

“Most cases of West Nile virus are mild,” said Dr. Amy Person, Health Officer for Benton and Franklin Counties. “However, serious illness and death are also possible. That’s why we urge people to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites and to contact their healthcare provider if they develop symptoms.”

Most people infected with West Nile virus won’t get sick. However, about one in five people who are infected with the virus will develop a fever and other symptoms such as a headache or body aches. West Nile virus infection can be very serious, resulting in encephalitis, meningitis, or other complications in about one out of 150 cases. In some cases, it can be fatal. People with certain medical conditions that affect the immune system, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, or kidney disease are at greater risk for serious illness.

Primarily causing infections in birds, West Nile virus can spread to people and other animals through mosquito bites. While a vaccine is available for horses, there is no current vaccine to prevent illness in people. Instead, people must take steps to help prevent infection.

Safety steps include:

- Drain sources of standing water around your home each week so mosquitoes don’t grow. The mosquitoes most likely to spread West Nile virus prefer to breed in water found in containers, tires, buckets, and other small sources of stagnant water.
- If possible, stay indoors during prime mosquito biting times: dusk and dawn.
- If going outside, use an EPA-approved insect repellent. Approved mosquito repellents have ingredients that include DEET, picaridin, PMD, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Be sure to read and follow the label directions

-more-

**Benton-Franklin Health
District Website**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

**Washington Department
of Health**
www.doh.wa.gov

**Centers for Disease
Control**
www.cdc.gov

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- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Windows and doors without screens should be kept shut, especially at night.
- Dress with long sleeves, pants, and a hat when mosquitoes are present.

The Benton-Franklin Health District works with local mosquito control districts and other partners to help monitor for the virus. Several mosquito pools in Benton and Franklin Counties have tested positive for West Nile virus this year. The risk of West Nile virus infection will be high until mosquitoes go away after the first hard frost. To track the virus in the Pacific Northwest or get additional information, view the DOH West Nile website at

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/DiseasesandChronicConditions/WestNileVirus>

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