



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
*Commissioner*

## 2010 DOHMH Advisory # 8: West Nile Virus Alert

### (1) Mosquitoes Test Positive for West Nile Virus in Camden, NJ; (2) Changes in Testing Services for Human West Nile Virus at the New York City Public Health Laboratory June 17, 2010

Please distribute to staff in the Departments of Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Neurology, Infection Control, Infectious Disease, Emergency Medicine, Critical Care, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Laboratory Medicine

**Peak mosquito season in New York City (NYC) begins in July. The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) reminds providers to be alert for cases of West Nile (WN) viral disease. The DOHMH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) will no longer provide WN virus testing services.**

- WN virus has been identified in a mosquito pool collected from Camden County, NJ on June 2, 2010. In NYC, collection and testing of mosquitoes for WN virus began in the first week of June; no WN viral activity has been detected in NYC to date.
- The DOHMH urges medical providers to be alert for possible cases of WN viral disease, particularly during the peak adult mosquito season, from July 1 through October 31. WN viral disease should be suspected in the differential diagnosis of patients presenting with viral meningitis, encephalitis, acute flaccid paralysis, and/or symptoms compatible with WN fever.
- Commercial serologic and encephalitis polymerase chain reaction (PCR) panel testing for WN virus is now widely available. (See attached guidelines for list of commercial laboratories offering WN viral testing services.)
- As of July 1, 2010, the DOHMH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) will no longer provide the following services:
  - 1) Routine human WN virus serologic testing.
    - However, PHL testing may be available for special situations (e.g. cases potentially due to an unusual source of transmission such as transfusion, transplant or laboratory-exposure). For consultation and/or to request testing in these situations, call the Bureau of Communicable Disease at 212-788-9830.
  - 2) Packaging and forwarding of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) to the New York State Department of Health David Axelrod Institute Laboratories at the Wadsworth Center Viral Encephalitis Laboratory (VEL) for the PCR panel.
    - The Wadsworth Center's viral encephalitis PCR panel is only available for patients who are currently hospitalized with encephalitis; providers and laboratories should ship specimens directly to the Wadsworth Center.
- Encephalitis, viral meningitis, and any arboviral infection with laboratory evidence of current or recent infection are all reportable conditions in NYC. See below for reporting requirements.

Dear Colleagues,

West Nile (WN) viral season in NYC is approaching. WN virus has already been identified in a mosquito pool collected on June 2, 2010 in Camden, NJ. In NYC, collection and testing of mosquitoes for WN virus began in the first week of June; no WN viral activity has been detected in NYC to date.

The NYC DOHMH reminds medical providers to be alert for possible cases of WN viral disease during the peak adult mosquito season, from July 1 through October 31. For all patients with suspected WN neuroinvasive disease (WNND), which includes patients with unexplained encephalitis, viral meningitis, acute flaccid paralysis, and/or patients with symptoms compatible with WN fever, send specimens for serologic testing for WN virus to a commercial laboratory, or to your hospital laboratory if testing is available. Your vigilance in identifying and testing suspect cases is an important part of the DOHMH's WN virus surveillance and control program. Laboratory-confirmed cases of WN viral disease identified and reported by the medical and laboratory community help to inform our mosquito control efforts.

**As of July 1, 2010, the DOHMH will no longer provide routine serologic testing for WN virus, or packaging and forwarding of CSF to the Wadsworth Center for the viral encephalitis PCR panel.** Resource constraints, coupled with the wide availability of serologic testing for West Nile (WN) virus through commercial laboratories, has led us to discontinue these services. However, PHL testing may be available for special situations (e.g. cases potentially due to an unusual source of transmission such as transfusion, transplant or laboratory-exposure). For consultation and/or to request testing in these situations, call the Bureau of Communicable Disease at 212-788-9830.

Attached are the updated "Guidelines for West Nile Virus Testing and Reporting Cases of Viral Encephalitis and Meningitis", Revised June 2010. These include a list of commercial laboratories that provide WN virus serologic testing, viral PCR or viral isolation testing, and links to the Wadsworth Center guidance for submitting CSF for the viral encephalitis PCR panel. Also attached are the "New York State Department of Health - Collection and Submission of Specimens for Viral Encephalitis Testing Instructions" for submitting specimens directly to the Wadsworth Center.

Viral encephalitis and meningitis are reportable conditions and should be reported routinely throughout the year. Arboviral infections with laboratory evidence of recent or current infection are also reportable, and should be reported immediately. During business hours, fax the completed Universal Reporting Form to the BCD at 212-788-4268, or call us at 212-788-9830, OR report via the electronic Universal Reporting Form. Both are accessible on line at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hcp/hcp-urf.shtml>.

Please call BCD at 212-788-9830 with any questions you may have about human surveillance and testing for WN virus. If you have questions related to packaging specimens for shipment to the Wadsworth Center for the viral encephalitis PCR panel, please call either the Wadsworth Center's Viral Encephalitis Laboratory at 518-474-4177 (ask for Viral Encephalitis Lab) or PHL's Virology Section at 212-447-2864.

As always, we appreciate the ongoing cooperation of the medical provider community in helping to identify and control infectious disease threats in NYC. The successful detection and control of WN virus in NYC has been due in large part to our ongoing excellent partnership with the city's medical and laboratory communities. Thank you for your continuing efforts.

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**Attachments (also available online at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/wnv/wnvhcp.shtml>):**

1. Guidelines for West Nile Virus Testing and Reporting Cases of Encephalitis and Viral Meningitis (June 2010 version)
2. Universal Reporting Form (September 2009 version) (download from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hcp/hcp-urf.shtml>)
3. New York State Department of Health - Collection and Submission of Specimens for Viral Encephalitis Testing Instructions (June 2010 version) (also available for download from <http://www.wadsworth.org/divisions/infdis/enceph/form.htm>)
4. New York State Infectious Diseases Requisition Form (on-line fillable form also available from <http://www.wadsworth.org/divisions/infdis/enceph/form.htm>)
5. New York State Viral Encephalitis/Meningitis Case Report Form (on-line fillable form also available from <http://www.wadsworth.org/divisions/infdis/enceph/form.htm>)