



West Nile Virus



What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness transmitted through infected mosquito bites. WNV infection can cause inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. Approximately 80% of people who are infected will not show any symptoms, while 20% of people who become infected will have mild symptoms lasting from a few days to a few weeks. One out of 150 persons will develop severe illness.

How is West Nile Virus spread?

WNV is transmitted to humans primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected birds and then transmit the virus to humans and other animals during subsequent feedings. A very small number of cases have been spread through infected blood transfusions, organ transplants and during pregnancy from mother to baby. WNV is not transmitted through casual contact. Symptoms usually occur 3-14 days after exposure.

How is West Nile Virus treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. Those experiencing a severe headache, stiff neck, high fever or confusion should seek immediate medical attention. Treatment is generally supportive. Intravenous fluids, airway management, and respiratory support may be needed.

How can West Nile Virus be prevented?

- Avoid shaded areas where mosquitoes may be resting.
- Limit outdoor activity in the early morning and evening, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear protective clothing, such as long sleeved shirts and pants.
- Using insect repellents. Follow the label instructions carefully.
- Maintain window and door screening to keep mosquitoes out.

- Reducing mosquito populations; eliminate all standing water that collects in birdbaths, boats, buckets, tires, unused pools, roof gutters, and other containers.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus:

Common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body Aches
- Sometimes a Skin Rash and Swollen Lymph Glands
- Nausea and Vomiting Occasionally

Less common, but more serious symptoms include:

- Muscle Weakness
- Vision Loss
- Numbness
- Stiff Neck
- Confusion
- Coma
- Tremors
- Paralysis

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CDC Public Information

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