

West Nile Virus



What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is an infection that is spread through the bites of mosquitoes that have become infected after feeding on infected birds. It can cause serious disease in humans.

Symptoms of West Nile:

Symptoms of West Nile Virus will typically appear 3 to 14 days after being infected.



About 80% of people infected with West Nile will show no symptoms.



Mild symptoms include:

- ⇒ fever
- ⇒ headache
- ⇒ body aches
- ⇒ nausea
- ⇒ vomiting
- ⇒ swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back

These symptoms can last for as short as a few days to as long as several weeks.



Some symptoms are more severe. According to the CDC, about 1 in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms include:

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| ⇒ high fever | ⇒ tremors |
| ⇒ headache | ⇒ convulsions |
| ⇒ neck stiffness | ⇒ muscle weakness |
| ⇒ stupor | ⇒ vision loss |
| ⇒ disorientation | ⇒ numbness |
| ⇒ coma | ⇒ paralysis |

These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

If you think you have West Nile Virus...

- If you have mild symptoms, they usually will improve on their own. You can seek medical attention if you want, but you do not have to.
- If you have severe symptoms like unusually bad headaches and confusion, seek medical attention immediately.

Prevention

The best way to prevent West Nile Virus is to prevent mosquito bites.



When outdoors, use repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, some oil of lemon eucalyptus or paramenthane-diol. Follow the directions on the package.



Use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants from dusk to dawn or consider staying indoors during these hours because this is the time when most mosquitoes are active.



Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.



Mosquitoes lay their eggs in still water, so 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. This will decrease the amount of mosquitoes around your home.

Who is At Risk



People who spend a lot of time outdoors are more at risk because they have more chances of being bitten. Wearing repellent is a good way to prevent mosquito bites.



People over 50 years old are at higher risk of developing severe symptoms, so if you are in this age range, take special care to prevent mosquito bites.



Anyone pregnant or nursing are encouraged to talk to their doctor if they develop **ANY** symptoms of West Nile virus.

Note: West Nile Virus is not spread through direct contact with other people who are infected. In a very small number of cases, West Nile Virus has been spread directly from an infected person through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and during pregnancy from mother to baby. Donated blood is checked for West Nile Virus before using on patients, so the likelihood of being infected through blood transfusions is low.