

FACT SHEET

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)

What is Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)?

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a rare, but serious disease caused by a virus spread by infected mosquitoes. EEE affects humans and horses. The EEE virus can cause encephalitis or swelling of the brain. Only a few cases are reported a year, but approximately one-third of the human cases are fatal.

How is it spread?

The virus that causes the disease lives almost exclusively in the bloodstream of infected birds, and in the mosquitoes that bite those birds. Once bitten by an infected mosquito, humans usually become sick 4-10 days later.

What are the symptoms?

- Abrupt onset of fever
- Headache
- Body aching
- Disorientation
- Change in level of consciousness
- Varying paralysis
- Coma
- Death

How can it be prevented?

- Use insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, OLE, PMD, or 2-undecanone.
- Limit outdoor activity in the evening when mosquitoes are most active.
- Maintain window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out.
- Reduce mosquito populations by eliminating all standing water that collects in birdbaths, boats, buckets, tires, unused pools, roof gutters, etc.
- Avoid shaded areas where mosquitoes may be resting.
- Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and pants.

How is it treated?

There is no cure or specific treatment for EEE. The treatment is supportive only. Encephalitis-related death usually occurs 2 - 10 days after onset of symptoms but can occur much later. Of those who recover, many are left with disabling and progressive, mental and physical impairments, which can range from minimal brain dysfunction to severe intellectual impairment, personality disorders, seizures, paralysis, and cranial nerve dysfunction. Many patients with severe impairments die within a few years.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

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