

FACT SHEET

West Nile Virus

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that causes an infection that results in swelling of the brain.

How is it spread?

Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes then spread WNV to people and other animals by biting them.

What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with WNV do not feel sick. About 1 in 5 people who are infected develop a fever and other symptoms. About 1 out of 150 infected people develop a serious, sometimes fatal, illness. Symptoms of WNV may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Joint pains
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Rash
- Neck stiffness
- Stupor
- Disorientation

How is it prevented?

The most effective way to prevent infection from WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.

- Limit evening outdoor activities when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Treat clothing and gear with insect repellent.
- Take steps to control mosquitoes indoors and outdoors.

How is it treated?

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for WNV. Over-the-counter pain medication can be used to reduce fever and relieve some symptoms. In severe cases, patients often need to be hospitalized to receive supportive treatment. If you think you or a family member might have WNV disease, talk with your health care provider.

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.