



West Nile Virus

A Fact Sheet prepared by the National Telecommunications Safety Panel

Introduction

West Nile virus (WNV) is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito, and can infect people, horses, many types of birds, and other animals.

Most people who become infected with West Nile virus will have either no symptoms or only mild ones, similar to flu-like symptoms including aches & pains, mild fever, nausea - with or without vomiting. If you or a family member has been bitten recently and have flu like symptoms, it is recommended that you consult with your family physician as soon as possible.

On rare occasions, West Nile virus infection can result in a severe and sometimes fatal illness known as West Nile encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain). The risk of severe disease is higher for persons 50 years of age and older and young children (ages 0-4yrs).

There is no evidence to suggest that West Nile virus can be spread from person to person or from animal to person.

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a potentially serious illness. It is a flavivirus commonly found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. Experts believe WNV is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall. This fact sheet contains important information that can help you recognize and prevent West Nile virus.

Prevention

Human illness from West Nile virus is rare, even in areas where the virus has been reported. The chance that any one person is going to become ill from a mosquito bite is low.

You can further reduce your chances of becoming ill by protecting yourself from mosquito bites.

To avoid mosquito bites:

- Apply an EPA-registered insect repellent such as those with DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus when you're outdoors.
- Read and follow the product directions whenever you use insect repellent.
- Wear long-sleeved clothes and long pants treated with repellent and stay indoors during peak mosquito feeding hours (dusk until dawn) to further reduce your risk.



Limit places for mosquitoes to breed

Limit the number of places available for mosquitoes to lay their eggs by eliminating standing water sources from around your home, and workplace. Examples are standing water in gutters, excess water in pots & plants, stagnant water in birdbaths, backyard ponds, puddles, under air conditioners, etc.

Reporting Dead Birds

Dead birds in an area may mean that West Nile virus is circulating between the birds and the mosquitoes in that area. Although birds, particularly crows and jays, infected with WN virus can die or become ill, most infected birds do survive.



The public can play an important role in monitoring West Nile virus through reporting dead birds to state and local health departments. States have different policies for collecting and testing birds, so see the [Links to State and Local Government Sites](#) page to find out how to report dead birds in your area.

Additional Information

- **Environmental Protection Agency**
<http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/factsheets/westnile.htm>
- **Centers For Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov
- **National Pesticide Information Center**
<http://npic.orst.edu/>
- **American Mosquito Control Association**
www.mosquito.org

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