

West Nile Virus (WNV)

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is an illness caused by mosquitoes. This happens during warm weather months (June to October) when mosquitoes are most active. People who are at the highest risk of serious illness and death are adults over 50, or people with weak immune systems (such as people with diabetes).

How is West Nile Virus spread?

This virus is usually spread from the bite of an infected mosquito. Not all mosquitoes are infected with the virus, but it is best to avoid all mosquitoes and stay safe. WNV isn't spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

What are the signs and symptoms of West Nile Virus?

Most people infected with WNV don't develop any symptoms. If symptoms do develop, they may include:

Mild: fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph nodes, skin rash that lasts a few days

Severe: high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness, confusion, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness

People develop symptoms 3 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. If you develop severe symptoms, call your doctor right away.

How is West Nile Virus treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV. People with mild symptoms may have headaches and fever that pass on their own. People with severe cases of WNV may need to be hospitalized.

How can you prevent the spread of West Nile Virus?

- Protect yourself: use insect repellent/bug spray with DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus, Picaridin, or IR3535 when you go outdoors
- Cover up: wearing shoes, socks, long sleeve shirts, and long pants when outdoors can help prevent bites
- Avoid mosquitoes: limit outdoor activities from dawn to dusk during mosquito season (June to October)
- Mosquito-proof your home: install screens on windows and doors
- Don't help them breed: mosquitoes lay their eggs in water so be sure to clean your swimming pool, bird bath or fish pond often
- Empty standing water from flower pots, buckets, barrels, old tires.



Key Messages

- WNV is an illness caused by mosquitoes.
- Most people who get WNV don't develop symptoms. Those with severe symptoms should seek medical care.
- You can prevent getting WNV by:
 - Using bug repellent
 - Installing screens on doors
 - Cleaning pools and ponds
 - Emptying standing water

References

L.A. Department of Public Health.
<http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd/>

California Department of Public Health. www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions

9/3/2012