



West Nile Virus Infection

How is West Nile Virus Spread?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus is also found in humans, horses, birds (at least 110 species) and other animals.

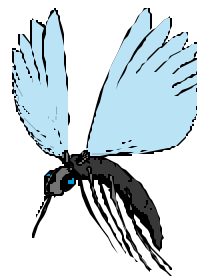
The presence of dead birds in an area can be a sign that WNV infection is present. Many birds that are infected will live, however, and so the absence of dead birds in your community does not mean that WNV is not present.

There is no indication that WNV can be spread from person to person or from animal to person. Proper care should be taken, however, in disposing of any dead animals that you come upon.

There are reports of infants being infected through their mother's breast milk. One in-

fant was infected before birth as well. Patients have also been infected through blood transfusions and organ donations.

MOST persons who are bitten by an infected mosquito will not get any WNV. Most who receive the virus will not have any significant symptoms or illness. Less than 1% of persons bitten by an infected mosquito will get significant illness. Everyone must be aware of the risk and prevent exposure.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

West Nile Virus was a common topic last year and has not gone away. The risk of infection remains present this year. Dead animals with the infection have already been reported in Louisiana in 2003. There are no "fool proof" ways to prevent infection, but there are a number of commonsense things that we can do to protect ourselves.

Special points of interest:

- Limit amount of exposure to high risk areas and at high risk times.
- Use insect repellent with DEET when outside.
- Only 20% of infected persons will have any symptoms.
- Approximately 1 in 150 infected persons will get severe disease.

What are the Symptoms?

Most persons infected with WNV will not have any symptoms.

The CDC estimates that 20% of infected persons will develop West Nile Fever. The mild form of the disease consists of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Occasionally: skin rash, swollen glands

The more severe form of the disease (encephalitis or meningitis) involves viral in-

fection of the brain and tissues around the brain. The symptoms of this form of the infection include:

- High fever
- Neck stiffness
- Stupor, confusion, coma
- Tremors
- Convulsions or seizures
- Muscle weakness, paralysis

The elderly, very young and persons with decreased immune systems are most at risk for developing the severe form of the disease.

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Mosquito repellents that contain DEET are far superior to all other products. These products are therefore recommended. For adults the amount of DEET in the product should be at least 10%. The more DEET in a product — the longer the protection. The product should be applied as recommended in the manufacturer's directions. When used appropriately DEET-containing products are safe. The products can irritate if put directly on cuts, sores or other open skin.

The Centers for Disease Control states that DEET can be used safely in children but consult your child's pediatrician with any questions.

Use insect repellents that contain
DEET



How can I best prevent West Nile Infection?

There are other measures that everyone must consider in addition to the use of insect repellent (discussed above).

- Wear long sleeves, long pants and socks. Spray insect repellent on the clothes.
- Mosquitoes are most active from dusk to dawn. Eliminate or limit the amount of time spent outside during these hours.
- Place mosquito netting over infant's strollers and carriers to prevent bites.
- Repair screens in windows that are left open in the summer to prevent mosquitoes from coming into the home.
- Stagnant water should be eliminated or activity should be moved away from areas with stagnant water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water.
- Empty out bird baths, children's pools, buckets and similar items every evening.
- Empty out clogged gutters & drains as well.
- Vitamin B and "ultrasonic" devices do not protect against bites.