

West Nile Virus



What Is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease found in the United States and many other places in the world. WNV cases occur from the summer through fall during mosquito season.

How Does WNV Spread?

WNV is usually spread to people through mosquito bites. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. WNV is not spread from person to person.

In a very small number of cases, WNV has been spread through:

- Exposure in a laboratory setting;
- Mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery, or breast feeding;
- Blood transfusion and organ transplant.

What Are the Symptoms of WNV Disease?

Most people (8 out of 10) who are infected with WNV do not have any symptoms. Some people (about 1 in 5 infected with WNV) develop a fever with other symptoms, like:

- Headache,
- Vomiting,
- Body aches,
- Diarrhea, or
- Joint pains,
- Rash.

A few people (about 1 in 150) infected with WNV will become very sick. The virus can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord).

How to Prevent WNV Infection?

The best way to prevent WNV infection is to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

- Use insect repellent,
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants,
- Treat clothing and gear,
- Keep screens on windows and doors in good repair, and
- Dump and drain any containers around your home that hold water.

