

What is West Nile virus?

West Nile is a virus carried by mosquitoes that can cause illness in some people.

How is West Nile virus spread?

People can get West Nile virus mainly from the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes can then transmit the virus to people or animals. The virus has also been transmitted with infected blood through transfusion. Transmission from person to person by casual contact does not occur.

What are the symptoms of West Nile virus?

Most people who are infected with West Nile virus suffer no symptoms at all. West Nile virus may cause headache, fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, and often a rash. In severe cases it may cause an infection of the brain called "encephalitis."

Who is most at risk from West Nile virus?

People 50 years of age and older and those with health problems are most at risk for serious illness due to West Nile virus.

Is there a vaccine for West Nile virus?

There is no vaccine to protect people from West Nile virus.

Can animals become infected with West Nile virus?

West Nile virus infection is common in birds and horses, but has also been found in cats, dogs, cattle, and many other animals.

Signs of infection in a horse may include nervousness, irritability, staggering, and lack of coordination.

There is a vaccine to protect horses from West Nile virus infection.

What can I do to protect myself from West Nile virus?

Avoiding mosquito bites can greatly reduce your chance of becoming infected with West Nile virus. To avoid bites:

- ✓ Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- ✓ Avoid places where there are mosquitoes.



- ✓ Avoid being outdoors when there are a lot of mosquitoes, particularly at dusk and dawn.
- ✓ Use repellents containing DEET (30% or less for adults, 10% or less for children) to prevent mosquito bites, carefully following the label instructions.
- ✓ Keep screens on windows and doors in good repair.

You can also protect yourself, your family, and your community from West Nile virus and other illnesses carried by mosquitoes by helping to reduce mosquito breeding sites as follows:

- ✓ Empty, destroy, recycle, or cover containers like tires, tin cans, buckets, and bottles that hold water where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.
- ✓ Change water in pet bowls and bird baths at least once a week.
- ✓ Remove or empty dishes under potted plants.
- ✓ Stock ponds and ditches with native fish.



- ✓ Cover unused pools.
- ✓ Clean clogged rain gutters.
- ✓ Repair leaky outdoor faucets
- ✓ Put special “donuts” made with mosquito-killing bacteria in water mosquito eggs may hatch.



What should I do if I think I have been infected with West Nile virus?

Anyone who may be ill from West Nile virus should see a doctor as soon as possible. Although there is no cure for the infection, most people who are infected with West Nile virus have only mild symptoms, if any at all, and recover fully with supportive treatment.

More Information

What is North Carolina doing about West Nile virus?

North Carolina has a well established history of managing other diseases carried by mosquitoes, such as eastern equine encephalitis and LaCrosse encephalitis. As it has done with these other viruses, North Carolina will manage West Nile virus through early detection, mosquito control, and education.

North Carolina mainly will rely on testing dead birds, particularly crows, and mosquitoes to detect West Nile virus. If West Nile virus poses a public health risk for an area, local and state public health officials will respond with appropriate mosquito control measures and encourage residents to follow personal protection strategies.

As always, North Carolina will encourage communities and individuals to follow preventative steps to reduce mosquito breeding and protect themselves against bites.

For more information about West Nile virus contact your local health department or the NC Public Health Pest Management Section at (919) 733-6407. You may also view Public Health Pest Management’s web site at www.deh.enr.state.nc.us.

For information about WNV and human health, call the NC Center for Communicable Disease at (919) 733-3419.

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