

West Nile Virus (WNV)

1. What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a disease caused by the bites of infected mosquitoes. It spreads during warm weather months when mosquitoes are most active. Everyone is at risk of WNV infection, but people at most risk of serious illness are the elderly and those with certain medical conditions like cancer, diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), and kidney disease. WNV can also infect animals like birds and horses.

2. How does WNV spread?

This virus spreads when someone gets bitten by an infected mosquito. While most mosquitoes are not infected with the virus, it is best to stay safe and avoid mosquito bites. WNV doesn't spread through casual contact, like touching or kissing a person with the virus.

3. What are the symptoms of WNV?

Most people who get WNV don't have any symptoms. Some will have mild symptoms similar to the flu. A few will have severe symptoms, like high fever, stiff neck, muscle weakness, and sometimes rash. People get symptoms 3 to 14 days after being infected. If your symptoms are severe, call your doctor right away.

4. How is WNV treated?

There are no medicines to treat WNV infection or shots to prevent it. Over-the-counter pain medicines can be used to lower fever and other symptoms. People with severe symptoms may need to be hospitalized.

5. What can you do to prevent WNV?

- Avoid getting mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that spread WNV are most active during evening to early morning hours (dusk to dawn).
- If you are outdoors during those times, use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents and cover up: wear long sleeve shirts, and pants and other protective clothing.
- Keep mosquitoes out of your home. Make sure your door and window screens are in good condition.
- Get rid of places where mosquitoes lay their eggs. Every 2-3 days, dump and drain water from potted plants, pet water bowls, bird baths, and other places where water collects.
- Help Public Health track WNV by reporting dead birds, which can be a sign of WNV in an area:

California Department of Public Health
1-877-WNV-BIRD or 1-877-968-2473
<http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>

- To report a potential mosquito breeding situation, contact:
Los Angeles County Vector Control
(310) 915-7370 or <http://www.lawestvector.org>



Key Points:

- WNV is caused by bites from infected mosquitoes. It doesn't spread through casual contact.
- While most people who are infected with WNV don't have symptoms, it's best to avoid mosquito bites, especially if you're older or have certain medical conditions.

For more information:

Los Angeles County
Veterinary Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm>

California Department of
Public Health
<http://www.westnile.ca.gov>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>