



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WEST NILE VIRUS FACT SHEET

What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?

WNV is a viral infection that occurs most often in birds but is spread to humans by mosquitoes. Having only first appeared in the United States in 1999, it has since spread to all states except Hawaii and Alaska. Most infections happen from June to September.

What are the symptoms?

- 70-80% develop no symptoms.
- **FEBRILE ILLNESS:** 1 in 5 will develop a fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash. Most people recover completely but fatigue can last for weeks or months.
- **SEVERE SYMPTOMS:** in less than 1% there is a development of neurologic illnesses such as encephalitis or meningitis (Swelling of brain or surrounding area) Symptoms include headache, fever, stiff neck, disorientation, tremors, seizures, coma or paralysis.

Symptoms appear usually 2 to 6 days, up to 14 days, after exposure.

How can it be prevented?

- Use insect repellents when going outside. Take care during peak mosquito biting hours (Dusk and dawn).
- When weather permits, wear long sleeves, pants and socks.
- Report dead birds to local authorities.

How can it be spread?

- Most commonly it is spread by mosquitoes.
- Can be transmitted from mother to infant during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding.
- It is not transmitted person to person.

How it is treated?

- People with milder symptoms recover on their own.
- There is no vaccine or medications to treat WNV.
- Over the counter medications are available to reduce pain and fever.
- In more severe cases, hospitalization is required.