

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. It first appeared in the United States in 1999 and 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% of cases neurologic illnesses, such as encephalitis or meningitis (swelling of brain or surrounding area), may develop. 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, especially during peak mosquito biting hours (dusk and dawn).
- Wear long sleeves, pants and socks, when weather permits.
- 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 is it 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.

