

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?

Symptoms may include:

- 70-80% develop no symptoms.
- FEBRILE ILLNESS (Fever): 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. <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ors/Survey/4>

How is it spread?

- Most commonly, it is spread by mosquitoes. (Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.)
- In a very small number of cases, it has been spread through:
 - Blood transfusion and organ transplant
 - Mother to infant during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding.
- It is NOT transmitted person to person by coughing, sneezing, or touching.

How is it treated?

- No vaccine or specific medicines are available for WNV.
- Over-the-counter medications are available to reduce pain and fever.
- In more severe cases, hospitalization is required.

People with milder symptoms recover on their own and do not need treatment.

More information: <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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