



West Nile Virus (WNV)

What is West Nile Virus?

- WNV is a virus that can cause disease in people, birds and horses.
- This virus first appeared in North America late in the summer of 1999 in New York City.

How does a person get West Nile Virus?

- WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito.
- Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on the blood of birds which carry the virus.
- Wild birds, in particular crows, ravens, jays and magpies often die when they are infected.
- WNV can also infect domestic poultry and mammals.
- Spread from animal-to-animal and animal-to-human does not appear to occur.
- Evidence has shown that a pregnant woman can pass WNV to her unborn baby. The virus can also be passed to an infant through breast milk. Rarely, WNV can be spread through blood transfusion.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Most people infected with WNV have no symptoms or have very mild disease.
- Symptoms can begin 3 to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito.
- Mild disease may cause flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and skin rash.
- Rarely, WNV causes severe disease such as meningitis. Symptoms include headache, fever, neck stiffness, muscle weakness, confusion, coma and death.
- Disease is usually more severe in the elderly, the very young and those with weakened immune systems.

How is West Nile Virus treated?

- People who have a sudden onset of symptoms should seek medical care immediately.
- Antibiotics are not effective.

(over)

How is West Nile Virus prevented?

- There is no approved vaccine for WNV.
- Personal protective measures include:
 - wear light colored, loose fitting clothes with long sleeves and pants when spending time outside
 - use mosquito repellent that contains DEET when you are outdoors, especially at dawn and dusk
 - do not use insect repellants on infants less than 6 months
 - choose 10% DEET or less for children aged 6 months – 12 years
 - ❖ age 6 months – 2 years: apply once a day avoiding hands and face
 - ❖ age 2 – 12 years: apply no more than 3 times a day avoiding parts of the hands which may have contact with the eyes or mouth
 - choose up to 30% DEET for 12 years and over
 - pregnant and nursing mothers consult your physician
 - make sure that window and door screens fit tightly and are free from holes.
- Reduce mosquito populations by:
 - draining any standing water (such as old tires, wading pools, eavestroughs). Empty and clean bird baths twice a week.
 - aerating ornamental ponds and stocking fish that eat mosquito larvae
 - covering rain barrels with screens. Mesh size should be less than 1.5 mm.
 - keeping grass cut short
 - keeping swimming pool covers free of stagnant water.

For more information contact Public Health Services,
Disease Control at **306-655-4612**