

FACT SHEET

West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness caused by mosquitoes. In North America this illness happens in summer through the fall. In the United States it was first seen in 1999. It is cycle of mosquito-bird-mosquito transmission (Arboviral). About 80% of humans that are bitten by an infected mosquito show no symptoms yet the 20 percent of the people who become infected will may have develop symptoms. About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness.

<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>

Cause: When an infected mosquito bites (feeds on) a bird or human it injects saliva containing the arbovirus into the body and causes the illness.

Symptoms: Most people have no symptoms. Mild symptoms range from fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and a rash on the chest, stomach and back. These symptoms can last from a few days to several weeks. Persons with severe symptoms may have high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

Spread: WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds that have been bitten by infected mosquitoes. The infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite by injecting saliva containing the virus into the body. Birds commonly survive their infections and develop permanent immunity but certain birds become ill and die.

http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/resources/pdfs/13_240124_west_nile_lifecycle_birds_plainlanguage_508.pdf

Incubation: Symptoms usually develop within 3-14 days.

Diagnosis and Treatment:

After a physical exam, lab tests can be done to show if antibodies (the body's immune system creates a protein that helps protect from invading organisms like viruses) are present. This confirms the presence of WNV or a West Nile-related illness, such as meningitis or encephalitis. Blood tests indicate and increase in antibodies to the West Nile virus. Other tests used are spinal tap which will show the presence of WNV antibodies in the spinal fluid and in rare cases brain tests can help determine the diagnosis. Most individuals recover on

their own. In severe cases hospitalization is required for supportive IV fluids and pain management.

<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/healthcareproviders/healthcareproviders-clinlabeval.html>

Prevention:

The best prevention is avoiding mosquito bites including staying indoors at peak mosquito feeding times: dusk, dawn and early evening times. Getting rid of places where mosquitos breed (standing water in any container, old tires, flower pots, bird baths, pet dishes, kiddie pools, pool covers, etc.) helps cut down on mosquito populations. When you do go outside Wear long sleeves and pants, use an EPA approved mosquito repellent with DEET and follow product directions. Cover your infants stroller or play pen if outside.