

## West Nile Virus: What You Need To Know

### What Can I Do to Prevent WNV?

The easiest and best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing DEET. Follow the directions on the package.
- Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flowerpots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in birdbaths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

### What Are the Symptoms of WNV?

- **Serious Symptoms in a Few People.** About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These may last several weeks, and effects may be permanent.
- **Milder Symptoms in Some People.** Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.
- **No Symptoms in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

### How Does West Nile Virus Spread?

- **Infected Mosquitoes.** Most often, WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite.
- **Transfusions, Transplants, and Mother-to-Child.** In a very small number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby.
- **Not through touching.** WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.



### How is WNV Infection Treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In severe cases, people usually need to go to the hospital to receive supportive treatment including intravenous fluids, help with breathing and nursing care.

### What Should I Do if I Think I Have WNV?

If you develop symptoms of severe WNV illness, such as unusually severe headaches or confusion, seek medical attention immediately.

### Who is at Risk of Getting Sick from WNV?

**People over 50 are at higher risk to get severe illness.** People over the age of 50 are more likely to develop serious symptoms of WNV and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

**Being outside means you're at risk.** The more time you're outdoors, the more time you could be bitten by an infected mosquito. Pay attention to avoiding mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing.

### If You Find a Dead Bird:

There is no connection between West Nile Virus and the bird flu. Don't handle any dead birds with your bare hands. Contact the Wayne County Department of Public Health at 734-727-7400 for instructions on reporting or disposing of the dead bird.