

Q: What can I do to reduce my risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus?

A: From April to October, when mosquitoes are most active, take the following precautions:

If outside from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active, or during the day in an area where there are weeds, tall grass, or bushes, people should wear protective clothing, such as long pants, loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts, and socks, and consider the use of an insect repellent containing DEET, according to the manufacturer's directions on the label.

Q: What can I do around my home to help reduce exposure to mosquitoes?

A: Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing or slow-moving water such as streams or creeks. Weeds, tall grass, and bushes provide an outdoor home for mosquitoes. They can enter homes through unscreened windows or doors, or broken screens.

- * Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace all screens that have tears or holes.
- * Drain all standing water in the yard. Empty water from mosquito breeding sites, such as flower pots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires and similar sites in which mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- * Remind or help neighbors to eliminate breeding sites on their properties.

For additional information:
Michigan West Nile Virus Hotline

1-888-668-0869

www.mdch.state.mi.us

www.cdc.gov



What is West Nile Virus?

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WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

A: West Nile is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

Q: How is West Nile virus spread?

A: West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. You or your child cannot get West Nile virus from a person who has the disease. West Nile virus is not spread by person-to-person contact such as touching, kissing, or caring for someone who is infected.

Q: Are older adults more at risk for West Nile viral disease?

A: Yes. While the chance of anyone becoming infected with West Nile virus is very low, most cases have occurred in people older than 50. People in this age group, especially the elderly, are also more likely to develop severe diseases, such as encephalitis or meningitis, if they become infected.

Q: Where did West Nile virus come from?

A: Outbreaks of West Nile viral disease have occurred in Africa, Egypt, Israel, Asia, Romania, Russia and France. Before 1999, however, West Nile virus had never before been found in the Americas. The most likely explanation for its appearance here is that the virus was introduced by an infected bird that was imported or an infected person returning from a country where the virus is common.

Q: Can you get West Nile virus directly from birds?

A: There is currently no evidence that West Nile virus can be spread directly from birds to people. However, dead birds can carry a variety of diseases and, therefore, should never be handled with bare hands. Use gloves to carefully place dead birds in double-plastic bags and then place in the outdoor trash. Dead crows that are found should be reported to the State's West Nile Virus toll-free hotline at 1-888-668-0869 for possible testing.

Q: Besides mosquitoes, can you get West Nile virus directly from other insects or ticks?

A: Infected mosquitoes are the primary source of West Nile virus and caused the recent outbreaks in NYC. There is no evidence to suggest that ticks or other insects transmit West Nile virus.

Q: What are the symptoms of West Nile viral infection?

A: Most people who are infected with West Nile virus either have no symptoms or experience mild illness such as a fever, headache and body aches before fully recovering. Some persons may develop a mild rash or swollen lymph glands. In some individuals, particularly the elderly, West Nile virus can cause serious disease that affects brain tissue. At its most serious, it can cause permanent neurological damage and can be fatal. Symptoms of encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) include the rapid onset of severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, confusion, loss of consciousness (coma), or muscle weakness, and may be fatal.

Q: How is West Nile encephalitis treated?

A: There is no specific therapy. In more severe cases, intensive supportive therapy is indicated, i.e., hospitalization, intravenous (IV) fluids and nutrition, airway management, ventilatory support (ventilator) if needed, prevention of secondary infections (pneumonia, urinary tract, etc.), and good nursing care.

Q: Is there a vaccine against West Nile virus?

A: No. A vaccine for West Nile virus does not exist.

Q: How long does it take to get sick if bitten by an infected mosquito?

A: Being bitten by an infected mosquito will not necessarily make you sick. Most people who are infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms or experience only mild illness. If illness were to occur, it would occur within 3 to 15 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Q: What should I do if I think I have West Nile encephalitis?

A: If you develop signs of encephalitis, with fever, muscle weakness, and confusion, you should seek medical care immediately.