



## **WEST NILE VIRUS FACT SHEET**

### **What is West Nile Virus?**

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis. Mosquitoes spread the virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals.

### **How can you be exposed to West Nile Virus?**

People are exposed to WNV by the bite of an infected mosquito.

### **Who is most at risk of West Nile Virus?**

People over 50 years of age have the highest risk of developing severe illness. As we age, our bodies have a harder time fighting off disease. People with a weakened immune system are also at increased risk. However, anyone can become infected.

### **What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus?**

Most people bitten by infected mosquitoes do not develop any symptoms. However, when symptoms do occur, they usually appear 5-15 days from the time you were bitten. Most people who are infected have no or only mild symptoms such as: low grade fever, headache and occasionally swollen lymph glands. More severe signs and symptoms can include: high fever, stiff neck, muscle weakness, disorientation, brain inflammation (encephalitis), coma and rarely death. If you have any of these symptoms you should call your doctor right away.

### **How soon do infected people get sick?**

Symptoms usually occur 5 to 15 days after an infected mosquito bites a person.

### **What is the treatment for West Nile Virus infection?**

There is no specific treatment for West Nile Virus infection. A physician may provide treatment to relieve the symptoms of the illness. In severe cases hospitalization may be required.

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent infection. To decrease exposure to mosquitoes and the viruses they may carry, personal protective measures include:

- Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts when outdoors particularly at dawn and dusk.
- Make sure screens on windows and doors are in good condition.

- When outdoors, use an insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 and apply as directed on the label. Do not allow young children to apply repellent on them - have an adult do it for them.
- Eliminate standing water which can be found in old tires, cans and blocked gutters from your property.
- Maintain your swimming pools. Empty, invert or cover swimming pools when not in use.
- Do not sweep lawn clippings into storm sewers or drains.
- Keep birdbaths clean. Change the water at least once a week.
- To control mosquitoes inside a house, use a “flying insect spray”. Be sure to use according to directions on the label.

**Where can I get more information on West Nile Virus?**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

**Source of information:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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