



West Nile Virus

MU Patient Education Series

Definition:

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness. It is most prevalent in the summer and continues through the fall. There are steps you can take to prevent getting the virus. Infected mosquitoes spread the West Nile Virus. The best way to avoid West Nile Virus is to prevent mosquito bites. West Nile Virus spreads by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can spread the virus to humans and to other animals when they bite.

SIGNS/SYMPTOMS:

No Symptoms

Approximately 80% of people (4 out of 5) who are infected with the West Nile Virus will not show any symptoms at all.

Mild Symptoms

Up to 20% of the people who become infected may have the following symptoms, which may last as short as a few days up to several weeks:

- Fever
- Headaches
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Swollen lymph glands
- Skin rash on the chest, stomach and back



Serious Symptoms

Approximately one in 150 people infected with West Nile Virus will develop serious illness. The symptoms may include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Neck stiffness
- Stupor
- Disorientation
- Coma
- Tremors
- Convulsions
- Muscle weakness
- Vision loss
- Numbness and paralysis

These symptoms may last for several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

PREVENTION:

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient, and follow the directions on the packet
- Mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk. Make sure you are wearing insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times. Consider staying indoors
- Make sure you have good screens on your doors and windows
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels
- Change the water in pet dishes and replace water in bird baths weekly
- Drill holes in tire swings so water can drain out
- Keep children's wading pools empty and turned on their sides when they aren't being used
- Community spraying for mosquitoes may also reduce mosquito breeding

Reference: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv_factSheet.htm

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