

West Nile Virus

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a potentially serious virus that is transmitted by mosquitoes that affects the nervous system. According to the CDC, it is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America, and the season typically stretches through summer and into fall.

How is it Spread?

Most often, West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. In a very small number of cases, WNV has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding, and mother-to-child during pregnancy. WNV is NOT spread through casual contact (such as touching, or kissing).

Symptoms *Symptoms develop between 3-14 days after a bite from an infected mosquito. Most people (~80%) infected with WNV show NO symptoms.*

Milder Symptoms, appearing in some people (~20%):

- Fever
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Body aches
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Skin rash

Serious symptoms, appearing in very few people (less than 1%):

- High fever
- Headache
- Neck stiffness
- Stupor
- Disorientation
- Coma
- Tremors
- Convulsions
- Muscle Weakness
- Vision Loss
- Numbness
- Paralysis

Can It Be Treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In milder cases, people experience symptoms such as fever and aches that pass on their own, although illness can last weeks to months. In serious cases, a person may have to be hospitalized and given supportive treatment (e.g. intravenous fluids, help with breathing), along with nursing care. There is no vaccine for WNV, but the CDC is working with partners to develop one.

What is the Risk of Getting Very Sick from WNV?

- **People over 50** at higher risk to get severe illness
- **Being outside means you're at risk;** the more time you spend outdoors (working or playing), the more time you could be bitten by an infected mosquito.
- **Risk through medical procedures is very low.**
- **Pregnancy and nursing do NOT increase risk** of becoming infected with WNV.

Mosquito Information

Not all mosquitoes carry WNV. It is primarily transmitted by members of the *culex* species, and only females bite humans. Typically, *culex* mosquitoes travel about 1-2 miles to feed. Adult mosquitoes have a life span of a few weeks during the summer months.

Can Animals Be Infected?

Yes. West Nile virus can infect just about any animal, including dogs and cats - however, the good news is they rarely, if ever, become sick from the virus. Equines appear to be the only domestic animal adversely affected by WNV, and there is a vaccine available. There is no proof that West Nile virus can be spread from person to person or from animal to person.

For More Information:

Denton County West Nile virus info line: (940) 349-2907

DentonCounty.com/WNV

CDC.gov/WestNile

TXWestNile.org



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