



WEST NILE VIRUS

What is WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus infection is spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes and usually causes a mild illness. However, it may also cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

Who is at risk for getting West Nile virus?

Anyone can get West Nile virus if bitten by an infected mosquito. However, even in areas where transmission of West Nile virus is known to occur, only a small proportion of mosquitoes are likely to be infected. Persons over 50 years of age are at the highest risk for severe disease.

How is West Nile virus transmitted?

West Nile virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. West Nile virus is not spread person to person. In a small number of cases, West Nile virus was transmitted by blood transfusion or organ transplantation. As a result, U.S. blood collection agencies screen blood donations for presence of the virus. Transmission has also occurred from pregnant woman to unborn child and through breast feeding. However, the number of these cases is very small.

What are the symptoms of West Nile virus?

The disease ranges from mild to severe. Mild illness includes fever and muscle aches, swollen lymph glands and sometimes a skin rash. In the elderly, infection may spread to the central nervous system or bloodstream and cause sudden fever, intense headache, and stiff neck and confusion, possibly resulting in encephalitis or meningitis. Healthy children and adults may not have any symptoms.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear between 3-15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

What is the treatment for West Nile virus?

There is no specific treatment. Supportive therapy will be used in more severe cases. Most people recover from this illness without any specific treatment. There is no vaccine available for West Nile virus.

How can West Nile virus infection be prevented?

Controlling the mosquito population and protecting against mosquito bites can decrease transmission of the virus. Follow these tips to help prevent West Nile virus:

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing.
- If possible, stay indoors when mosquitoes are biting.
- Use insect repellent products with 25 to 35 percent DEET for adults and less than 10 percent for children.
- Turn over or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays and toys.
- Eliminate standing water on tarps, pool covers or flat roofs.
- Clean out birdbaths and wading pools twice weekly.
- Clean roof gutters and downspout screens.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

Revised 6/2011

Page 1 of 1