

GET THE FACTS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS

What is the West Nile Virus (WNV)?

West Nile Virus infection can cause an illness called West Nile Fever, characterized by fever, muscle aches, rash and headache. West Nile Fever can sometimes be a significant illness, with lingering weakness and fatigue lasting several weeks. More severe West Nile illness is less common, but can include meningitis (inflammation of the membrane surrounding the brain) and encephalitis (inflammation and swelling of the brain itself).

Human infections occur when people are bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus. On average, only about 2 in 10 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito will actually become ill. People at most risk for developing WNV illness include those of advanced age, people with chronic health conditions, or those with compromised immune systems.

What can the public do to prevent WNV?

- Turning over wheelbarrows and plastic wading pools when not in use.
- Cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools and keeping water from collecting on pool covers.
- Removing items that may hold water, including buckets, metal cans, plastic containers, old tires, bottles, jars, cups and saucers placed under flower pots.
- Ensuring that rain gutters and downspouts are not clogged.
- Changing the water in birdbaths and pets' water bowls every three to four days.
- Keeping grass and bushes trimmed, and filling in low spots on lawns.
- Checking to see that all screens on doors and windows are tight-fitting and free on holes and tears.
- Encouraging neighbors to help eliminate standing water on their properties.

The second important step is to prevent mosquitoes from biting:

- Use mosquito repellent when outdoors.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors for long periods of time.
- Minimize outdoor activities between dusk and dawn.