



# West Nile Virus Fact Sheet

West Nile Virus (WNV) is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the continental United States. WNV is most commonly spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. WNV is most prevalent during mosquito season, and currently, there are no vaccines to prevent WNV.

## How does WNV spread?

WNV is spread to humans via infected mosquitoes. Mosquitos become infected when they feed on infected birds, which allows them to spread the virus to humans and other animals when bit.

## What are the symptoms?

- Most people (8 out of 10) infected with WNV do not develop symptoms.
- Febrile illness (fever): Approximately 1 in 5 individuals infected with WNV will exhibit symptoms such as fever, headache, body ache, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or a body rash. Most people with this type of WNV disease recover completely, however, fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months.
- Serious symptoms: Approximately 1 in 150 individuals infected with WNV will develop serious illness affecting the central nervous system, such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord). Serious symptoms include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, and/or numbness and paralysis.
  - Severe illness can occur in individuals of any age, however, those 60 years of age or older are at increased risk. People with certain medical conditions or immunocompromised individuals are at greater risk.
  - Recovery from severe illness can take weeks to months. Some effects to the central nervous system may be permanent. 1 in 10 people who develop severe illness affecting the central nervous system do not survive.

## How are WNV infections treated?

Unfortunately, there is no specific treatment for WNV infection. Milder symptoms often resolve on their own, however, serious cases are most often treated in the hospital where they can receive proper care and supportive therapeutics.