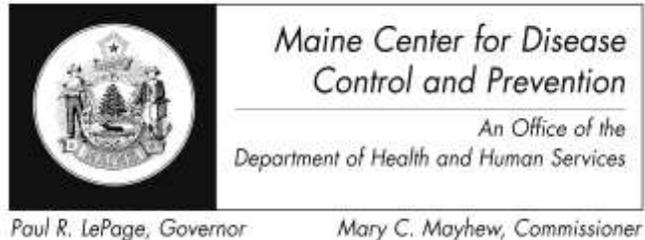


West Nile Virus

Fact Sheet



What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a potentially serious viral illness that is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. In a small number of cases, WNV has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding, and from mother to baby during pregnancy.

What are the symptoms of WNV?

Most people who are infected with WNV will not show any signs of illness. Some people (up to 20%) who are infected will have mild symptoms such as fever, head and body aches, nausea, rash, and swollen glands. A small percentage of people infected with WNV will develop serious illness with symptoms that can include high fever, altered mental status, neck stiffness, convulsions, coma, and sometimes death.

How soon do people infected with WNV get sick?

People usually begin to show signs of illness 3 to 15 days after a bite from an infected mosquito.

How is WNV diagnosed?

WNV can only be diagnosed by a health-care provider. If you think you have signs of illness compatible with WNV you should speak with your provider as soon as possible. If your provider thinks you have WNV, he or she will take samples of blood and cerebral spinal fluid to be tested for WNV.

What is the treatment for WNV?

There is no specific treatment for WNV. Most people who are infected recover without treatment. Severe WNV illness usually requires supportive treatment in the hospital. This treatment can include intravenous fluids, help with breathing, and nursing care.

Is there a vaccine to prevent WNV?

No, currently there is no vaccine available to prevent WNV.

What can I do to protect myself from WNV infection?

The best way to avoid WNV is to avoid being bitten by the mosquitoes that transmit the disease.

- Use an EPA approved repellent when outdoors. Always follow the instructions on the label
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, and socks when outdoors
- Use screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of your house
- Avoid being outdoors at dawn or dusk when many mosquitoes are most active
- Get rid of places where mosquitoes can lay their eggs by draining standing water around your house

Why do people talk about dead birds and WNV?

Mosquitoes become infected with WNV when they feed on infected birds. Some birds become very sick and die in large numbers from the WNV infection.

What should I do if I find group of 3 or more dead birds?

Do not touch the birds with your bare hands. Contact Maine CDC for instructions on how to report and safely dispose of the birds.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or visiting the website <http://www.mainepublichealth.gov>. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.