



SAINT LOUIS ENCEPHALITIS (SLE) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS SLE?

St. Louis encephalitis is a rare disease that is caused by a virus spread by infected mosquitoes. St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV) is one of a group of mosquito-transmitted viruses that can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).

HOW DO YOU GET SLE?

From the bite of an infected mosquito.

SYMPTOMS

- It takes 5 to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito to develop symptoms of SLE disease.
- Most people who are infected with SLE have no symptoms or only mild non-specific flu-like illness.
- In some individuals, especially the elderly, SLE can cause serious illness that affects the central nervous system. Symptoms often include fever, headache, stiff neck, disorientation, and altered level of consciousness.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for SLE disease. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Severe illnesses are treated by supportive therapy. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

Prevent mosquito bites:

- Dump standing water around your home once a week
- Use insect repellent
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Use screens on windows and doors. Repair any holes.

DPHD EFFORTS:

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education. The DPHD regularly trap and test mosquito populations and fog areas where human disease is confirmed.