



WEST NILE VIRUS INFECTION (WNV) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a viral infection typically spread by mosquitoes. In North America, cases of WNV occur during mosquito season, which starts in the summer and continues through fall. WNV cases have been reported in all of the continental United States.

HOW DO YOU GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

Most commonly spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes then spread West Nile virus to people and other animals by biting them. In a very small number of cases, WNV has been spread through:

- Exposure in lab setting
- Blood transfusion and organ donation
- Mother to baby, during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding

SYMPTOMS

Many people infected with WNV do not develop any symptoms. Symptoms typically appear 2 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Initial symptoms in those who become ill may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Rash

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection – care is based on symptoms. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

The most effective way to avoid West Nile virus disease is to prevent mosquito bites. Be aware of the West Nile virus activity in your area and take action to protect yourself and your family. Prevent mosquito bites by:

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

HEALTH DISTRICT 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 sprays areas where human disease is confirmed. [Click here for a full FAQ about the spray used to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.](#)