



Here comes West Nile Virus (WNV), again!

With temperatures rising, mosquitoes will be reappearing. This disease, spread by mosquitoes, may infect people in nearly every state, so it's important to be prepared. West Nile Virus disease is a harmful illness. The various forms, West Nile Virus fever, meningitis, encephalitis or acute flaccid paralysis all have serious impact on people. More information has been and will continue to be learned about this emerging disease in the United States. Here's what you need to know about this recent intruder.

MOSQUITO BITES: Avoid them.

Do everything you can to avoid exposure to mosquitoes. The only way to prevent WNV infections is to control the mosquito population and avoid mosquito bites.

TRANSMISSION: Mosquito bites are the primary transmission of infection.

It is now known that WNV can be transmitted through transplanted organs and blood transfusions from infected people; this is rare since blood and organs can be screened for the virus. Transmission can occur from mother-to-child in utero and in breast milk if the mother is infected during pregnancy or after delivery. More study is being done about these modes of transmission.

Infection is thought to confer fairly long term immunity.

INCUBATION PERIOD: 3-14 days after a bite by an infected mosquito.

People that get WNV disease may start to have symptoms as early as day 3 or 4 after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

LATE SUMMER: Time of most human disease activity in Colorado.

WNV has been most likely to impact the human population in mid summer. Provider offices might start seeing some patients with WNV symptoms as early as the end of June. People need to take precautions to avoid mosquitoes during the warm weather and if they are going to be outdoors at times near dawn or dusk.

AGE: Anyone of any age can get WNV disease.

Children are not particularly vulnerable; however, parents still need to take precautions with their children. Children can get WNV fever and its associated dehydration. There were cases of WNV meningitis in teens.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS of SERIOUS ILLNESS: Call or see your medical provider.

If you experience fever, disorientation, muscle weakness, neck stiffness, headache, nausea during the WNV season you should be evaluated by your medical provider. Contact a medical provider, IMMEDIATELY if your symptoms get worse or if you experience any sensory changes. This includes blurry vision, increasing sensitivity to light or noise, loss of hearing, dizziness, and difficulty moving, speaking, breathing or swallowing.

TREAT the SYMPTOMS-there is no vaccine or medication specific to WNV.

These are some self care tips you can do if you have been told to rest at home:

- Use over-the counter medicine that contain ibuprophen (as in Advil), acetaminophen (as in Tylenol), to help control fever, headache and body aches.
- Drink fluids often. Water, clear juices, and sports drinks will defend against dehydration and weakness. Dehydration can make headache and fatigue worse. Call your doctor if you are vomiting, have nausea and/or decreased appetite that keep you from getting enough fluids. Your doctor may give you an anti-nausea medicine or intravenous (IV) fluids to break the cycle of dehydration.
- Listen to your body and rest in a quiet, dark area when tired. WNV stresses the body's immune system. Your body will need much time to repair itself. People with WNV fever have experienced fatigue and weakness even several weeks after the acute illness. Frequent naps and nutritious snacks support your body's efforts to 'get back to normal'.
- Use sunglasses if you will be out in bright light. Bright light can often trigger a headache, again in the week following the acute phase of the illness. Headaches can be persistent several days or weeks after the initial illness.
- If you were getting regular exercise before you were sick you need to 're-train'. Start slowly, and gradually build your stamina and endurance. Again, be careful not to get dehydrated with your workout. Drink fluids before you start your workout, during and after. Eat protein rich foods to aid in regaining muscle mass. Protein rich foods include: meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, nuts and nut butters, beans and other legumes.
- You may find returning to work full time very tiring which may affect your productivity and safety. Again, stay well hydrated, eat well, and try napping at your lunch break. You may want to talk with your supervisor about shorter work hours or a gradual return to your usual work hours.