

WEST NILE VIRUS

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is an arbovirus that is transmitted to humans through an infected mosquito's bite. Historically, WNV has been found in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East; it was not found in the United States until 1999 in New York City. Since then, it has spread and can now be found in mosquitoes across the U.S. Montana began seeing WNV in 2002. Since then, the state has seen over 500 human cases.

Signs and Symptoms

70-80% of people infected with WNV will show no symptoms.

About 1 in 5 infected people will develop a fever with other symptoms such as:

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Body aches
- Diarrhea
- Joint pains
- Rash

Most people with this type of WNV will recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last weeks or months.

Less than 1% of infected people will develop a serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. The symptoms of neurologic illness can include:

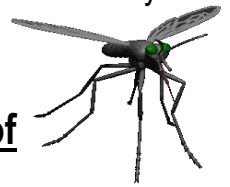
- Headache
- Coma
- High fever
- Tremors
- Neck stiffness
- Seizures
- Disorientation
- Paralysis

If you experience any of these symptoms, see a health care provider immediately.

How do People get West Nile Virus?

Humans are infected with West Nile Virus primarily by being bitten by an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds, but there is no evidence of a person being infected by a bird.

In rare cases, WNV has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, and from mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.



How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of West Nile Virus?

There are no medication to treat WNV. Over-the-counter pain relievers can be used to reduce fever and relieve some symptoms.

There is no WNV vaccine for humans, so bite prevention is the best defense. To protect yourself, use the 4 Ds:

- **DEET**-Apply repellent that includes DEET, Picaridin, and oil of lemon eucalyptus to exposed skin and clothing. These are the three most effective insect repellents. Permethrin may be used on clothing but can be very toxic, so use it with extreme caution. Do not spray aerosols on your face—spray it into your hands and rub on your face.
- **DUSK and DAWN**-This is when mosquitoes are most active. Try to avoid outdoor activities during these times.
- **DRAIN STANDING WATER**-Standing water is the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. Drain such areas around your home (gutters, pools, tires, buckets, water bowls, etc.).
- **DRESS APPROPRIATELY**-Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks.

For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at City-County Health Department at 452-6950 or visit www.cchdmt.org or www.cdc.gov