



# NORAD-USNORTHCOM/SG

## West Nile Virus- Sample News Article

As warmer temperatures arrive, the re-emergence of mosquitoes and the West Nile Virus (WNV) won't be far behind. The virus, first identified in 1937 in the West Nile region of Uganda, spread to the United States in 1999. Experts believe that WNV is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall.

Mosquitoes, a natural WNV host, become infected from biting infected birds. In turn, the mosquitoes can infect humans and animals.

Most people (80%) who are infected with mosquito-borne viruses do not become ill and have no symptoms. For persons who do become ill, the time between the mosquito bite and the onset of symptoms, known as the incubation period, ranges from 3-14 days. Two clinically different types of disease occur in humans. Symptoms of the viral fever syndrome include fever, headache, and malaise. These symptoms persist for about 27 days and affect approximately 1 in 5 infected people. In rare cases, the virus can cause a more serious brain infection such as aseptic meningitis or encephalitis, affecting approximately 1 in 150 infected individuals. These infections begin with a sudden onset of high fever and a headache, and then may progress to stiff neck, disorientation, tremors, and coma. Severe infections can result in permanent brain damage or death. Most deaths occur in persons over 50 years of age.

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In cases with mild symptoms, people experience symptoms such as fever and aches that pass on their own. In more severe cases, people may need supportive treatment from a medical facility.

For most, risk is low. Very few people who are bitten by mosquitoes develop any symptoms of the disease and relatively few mosquitoes actually carry WNV.

Prevention is key. Being aware of prevention activities will reduce the disease in the population.

- Avoid Mosquito Bites
  - Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants and socks sprayed with repellent while outdoors.
  - Stay indoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
  - Spray insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin and clothing when you go outdoors. Adults and children more than 2 months of age can use preparations containing up to 35% DEET. Don't put repellent on kid's hands because it may get in their mouth or eyes.
- Mosquito-proof your home
  - Keep mosquitoes outside by fixing or installing window and door screens
  - Drain standing water. A small amount of standing water can be enough for a mosquito to lay her eggs. Look around every week for possible mosquito breeding places.
  - Empty water from buckets, cans, pool covers, flower pots and other items. Throw away or cover up stored tires and other items that aren't being used. Clean pet water bowls weekly. Check if rain gutters are clogged. If you store water outside or have a well, make sure it's covered up. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.
- Dead Birds
  - If you find a dead bird, don't handle the body with your bare hands. Contact your local health department for instructions on reporting and disposing of the body.

If you would like additional information please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov> or contact **BASE CLINIC at XXX-XXXX**

