

West Nile Virus



What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a **potentially serious illness spread by mosquitoes**. WNV is more **common in the summer months** when mosquitoes are most active.

What are the symptoms of WNV?

People can develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

No symptoms in most people: About 80% of people infected will have no symptoms. There is no way to know in advance if you will experience symptoms or not.

Mild symptoms in some people: About 20% of people infected will have mild symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Rash

Severe symptoms in few people: A small number of people (1 in 150) infected will have severe symptoms such as:

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Disorientation
- Vision loss
- Muscle weakness
- Tremors
- Paralysis

Severe illness can result in long-term neurological problems or death. **People over the age of 50 are more likely to develop severe illness.**

How can I prevent WNV infection?

The best way to prevent infection with WNV is to **prevent mosquito bites**.

- When outdoors, **use repellents** approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Follow directions on the label. Many EPA-approved **repellents are safe** for children and babies and wash off at bath time.
- Wear **long sleeves and pants** while outdoors. Treating outdoor clothing with permethrin can add extra protection.
- Mosquitoes that carry WNV in Wyoming are most active during **dawn and dusk**. **Avoid outdoor activities during this time.**
- Remove mosquito breeding grounds from around your home by **emptying standing water** from flower pots, buckets, and other items you may have outside. Clean and replace water in bird baths and pet bowls **at least once a week**.
- **Use screens** on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

What should I do if I think I have WNV?

Mild WNV illness improves on its own, and people do not necessarily need to seek medical attention, though they may choose to do so. **If you develop symptoms of severe infection, seek medical attention immediately.** Severe WNV infection usually requires a hospital stay. If you are **pregnant or breastfeeding**, talk to your healthcare provider about WNV if you develop symptoms.