

WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV) DISEASE FACT SHEET

■ WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV)?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a disease that is spread by mosquitoes. The virus originated from Africa and since 1999 has continued to spread throughout the United States. It is well established in many areas of California, including Long Beach.

■ HOW IS WNV SPREAD?

WNV is primarily spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected after feeding on birds who are infected with the virus. These infected mosquitoes can then spread the WNV to humans and other animals when they bite. It is possible, but extremely rare to get infected through blood transfusions, organ transplants, and from mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding. WNV is **NOT** spread by casual contact or by simply breathing in the virus.

■ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WNV?

Most (70%-80%) people do not experience any symptoms. However, if there are symptoms they usually occur within 2-6 days, but can range from 2-14 days. About 20% of people who are infected develop a fever and other symptoms like headaches, body aches, joint pain, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. In rare cases (less than 1%) people who become infected can experience serious neurological issues, like encephalitis or meningitis, which is inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues.

■ HOW DO I PREVENT GETTING WNV?

Currently there is no vaccine or medication to prevent WNV. However, there are ways you can reduce your risk of exposure to mosquitoes:

- Use air conditioner and make sure to repair all broken window/door screens
- Use mosquito repellents on exposed skin
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, especially at dawn and dusk
- Wear permethrin-treated clothing
- Empty standing water from outdoor containers

If you are sick with WNV, avoiding mosquito bites will help prevent further spreading of the virus.

■ WHERE DO I GET TESTED FOR WNV?

- Contact your doctor if you think you or a family member might have WNV.
- Your doctor may order blood tests to look for signs of WNV or other similar diseases.

■ HOW CAN WNV BE TREATED?

- There is no medicine to treat WNV
- There are medicines to help reduce the fever and pain

Most patients feel better within a week, although some may develop long-term joint pain. People at increased risk for severe disease include newborns exposed during delivery, older adults (65 years and older), and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease. Death is rare.

■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT WNV?

California Department of Public Health:
http://westnile.ca.gov/wnv_faqs_basics.php

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>

For additional questions regarding mosquitoes and West Nile Virus, call 562.570.7907

