

# WEST NILE VIRUS



West Nile Virus (WNV) is an illness spread to humans by mosquitoes. WNV infections are most common in Wisconsin during the months of May through September, when mosquitoes are most active. Anyone can get WNV, but people over the age of 60 and those with a compromised immune system are at greater risk for serious complications.



## What causes it?

- ▶ Mosquitoes get WNV by feeding on birds with the virus. WNV is then spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The risk for WNV is greatest during warm summer months.
- ▶ WNV cannot be spread person-to-person.
- ▶ Once a person has had WNV, they cannot get it again.



## What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people infected with WNV have no signs or symptoms. When someone does have symptoms they usually occur three to 14 days after being bitten by the mosquito.

### Mild Symptoms

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Joint pain
- ▶ Body aches
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Skin rash

### Severe Symptoms

- ▶ High fever
- ▶ Severe headache
- ▶ Neck stiffness
- ▶ Swelling of the brain
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Tremors
- ▶ Vision loss
- ▶ Muscle weakness



## What are the treatment options?

There is no vaccine or cure for WNV, but over-the-counter pain medications can be used to reduce fever and ease symptoms. In severe cases, you may have to go to the hospital to receive fluids and pain medication.



## How can it be prevented?

Follow these steps to reduce your risk of being bitten by a mosquito:

- ▶ Wear insect repellent with 20%-30% DEET, use 0.5% permethrin on clothes, or use another EPA registered insect repellent that can be found on the [Environmental Protection Agency's \(EPA\) website](#). Follow directions on manufacturer's label.
- ▶ When outdoors, wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, high socks, and closed-toe shoes. Tuck shirt into pants so that mosquitoes do not fly under your clothes.
- ▶ Use screens on windows and doors of your home, and check that there are no holes in them.
- ▶ Get rid of standing water around your home where mosquitoes can breed. At least once a week, empty and scrub, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, birdbaths, or pet bowls. Make sure to regularly unclog roof gutters as well.
- ▶ Limit time spent outdoors at dawn and dusk from May to September, or when mosquitoes are most active.

