



West Nile Virus from Mosquito Bites

What is West Nile Virus?

A viral illness that is spread by certain species of mosquitos.

How do you get West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is carried by some Culex Tarsalus mosquitos.

If you happen to be bitten by a mosquito that carries the virus you can become ill.

Who is at greatest risk?

Anyone who is exposed to mosquitos! Especially the very young and the elderly or anyone with an existing health condition that effects their immunity. Adults over age 50 are more likely to develop the severest symptoms.

What are the signs and symptoms?

80% of people who are infected have few if any symptoms. Almost all of the other 20% will have moderate symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, headache, body ache and fever. Less than 1 % will develop the very severe symptoms of muscle weakness, numbness, vision loss, disorientation, coma, tremors, high fever, and headache or neck stiffness.

To be diagnosed, contact your local health care center

How is West Nile Virus treated?

There is no specific treatment, medication or cure for WNV disease. In most cases the symptoms will clear up in a few weeks to months. However, those with severe symptoms will be hospitalized for help breathing and to receive intravenous fluids and supportive care.

How is West Nile Virus prevented?

Protect yourself from mosquito bites in two ways:

1. Reduce the breeding or laying of eggs. This ultimately reduces the number of mosquitos. It is easier to not allow them to breed than to try and kill the adult mosquitos. Reduce the breeding by:
 - Draining any water outdoors that is sitting still. Standing water is where mosquitos breed. Mosquitos can reproduce in water in less than 7 days i.e. water pooled in old tires, pet dishes, buckets, discarded household items, children's' wading pools, even animal foot prints with rain water in them.

- Keep grass around the home short and don't let trimmings or leaves pile up in the yard or in eaves trough.
- If you have a rain barrel, fit it with a screen lid.
- Drain and rinse animal watering containers weekly.
- Ensure your property landscaping allows for good drainage or run off and eliminates pooling of water.
- For areas where standing water cannot be avoided, use an aerator or a chemical larvicide to decrease the likelihood of the water being used as a breeding area.

2. Reduce the risk of being bitten by an adult mosquito by:

- Ensure your house and deck or tent window screens are in good repair.
- Mosquitos are the most active at dusk and dawn. During these times wear long sleeved shirts and full length pants and use insect repellent or stay indoors during these times.
- Use a mesh bug screen on your babies' stroller.
- Use insect repellents when heading out of doors, such as one containing DEET. Make sure you follow label directions for applying on children and infants.

Age	DEET Concentration	Frequency
Under 6 months		Not recommended
6 months to 2 years	10%	Once per day
2 years to 12 years	10%	Up to 3 times per day
Adults and children over 12	30%	About every 6 hours

What are long term complications of West Nile Virus?

Potentially encephalitis (swelling of the brain) or even death.

References:

The National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Vector Borne Diseases
Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Health