

:: WEST NILE VIRUS ::

West Nile Virus is a potentially serious illness. It is a strain of encephalitis, which is a viral disease that is carried by mosquitoes. It is spread when a mosquito bites an infected bird, then bites a person. It is a seasonal epidemic that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall.

Those who are at the greatest risk are people 50 and older, small children, pregnant women, and those who have conditions that compromise their immune system, such as HIV or chemotherapy.

Symptoms usually appear five to 15 days after being bitten. About 80 percent of infected people do not suffer any symptoms at all. About 20 percent of infected people suffer mild symptoms such as headaches, fever, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and skin rashes on the chest, stomach and back. These symptoms last a few days. A very small amount of people will also suffer serious symptoms, such as muscle weakness, stiff neck, convulsions, numbness, disorientation or even coma. These symptoms may last several weeks, and immediate medical attention is necessary.

Some ways to prevent mosquito bites include:

- Use insect repellent with an EPA-registered active ingredient (DEET, Picaridin, Permethrin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus or IR3535)
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Use insect repellent on clothing
- Drain pools of standing water on your lawn and property (mosquitoes breed in stagnant water)
- Check for clogged rain gutters
- Drain water on pool covers
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools
- Make sure your window screens fit tightly and are in good repair
- Consider staying indoors during dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.

Vitamin B and “ultrasonic” devices are not effective in preventing mosquito bites.