

About West Nile Virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-carried virus that can cause serious illness. West Nile virus is spread to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes spread the virus when they feed on an infected bird, and then bite people, animals, or other birds.



Symptoms

Most people who are infected with WNV will not become ill. Two to fourteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito, some people may develop flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches. Occasionally, they may have swollen glands or a rash. These symptoms can last for a few days or up to several weeks.

In rare cases, infection can result in a severe and sometimes fatal illness. Serious infection is marked by high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, muscle weakness, disorientation, and convulsions. Some symptoms may persist for years.

If you begin to experience serious symptoms of infection 2-14 days after a mosquito bite, see your doctor.

With serious West Nile illness, intensive medical care may be required, such as hospitalization, intravenous fluids, and prevention of secondary infections such as pneumonia.

There is currently no vaccine available for humans.

Anyone, at any age, can contract WNV infection. The risk of severe infection is higher among people who are 50 or older.

WNV is not spread by person-to-person contact (for example, you won't get it by touching or kissing an infected person). A very small number of people have been infected with WNV through blood transfusions and organ transplants, and through transmission from mother to baby during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

There is no evidence that people can get West Nile virus directly from infected birds, dead or alive. However, people should avoid touching any dead bird or animal with their bare hands.

How to Prevent WNV

- Twice a week, drain standing water on your property and routinely empty anything that holds water, including buckets, wading pools, pet bowls, tire swings, bird baths, and toys.
- Keep door and window screens "bug tight." Repair or replace them as needed.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and long sleeve shirts when outside, especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use insect repellents according to directions.

Safe Use of Insect Repellents

Repellents containing the following ingredients are effective against mosquitoes:

- ♦ DEET
- ♦ Picaridin
- ♦ Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus
- ♦ IR3535
- ♦ Permethrin

Permethrin is recommended for use on clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear. Permethrin-treated clothing repels and kills ticks and mosquitoes and retains this effect after repeated laundering. Follow directions carefully.

Repellents used on children should contain no more than 30% DEET. Insect repellents are not recommended for children younger than two months.

- ♦ Spray your own hands and then rub the product on child's exposed skin, avoiding eyes and mouth. Children should not apply repellent themselves.
- ♦ If a child still puts their hands in their mouth, do not apply repellent to hands.
- ♦ Consider using mosquito netting over infant carriers, strollers or playpens.
- ♦ Always keep repellent out of reach of children.

If you suspect you or your child is having a reaction to an insect repellent, discontinue use, wash treated skin thoroughly and call the Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222. If you go to a doctor, take the repellent with you.

Testing Dead Birds for WNV

Birds and horses typically become infected with WNV before humans, so dead Corvid birds (see below) and sick horses are an early indicator that there is WNV activity in an area. The Spokane Regional Health District monitors Spokane County for the presence of dead corvid birds.

Testing criteria:

- ◆ Only “freshly dead” corvid birds can be tested
- ◆ Must be in physically good condition - intact with no obvious cause of death such as caught by a cat, flew into a window, electrocution, hit by a car, etc.
- ◆ No bad odors or maggots present
- ◆ Bird must not be soft and mushy. It must have most feathers intact.

If the bird meets the criteria, go to

www.srhd.org/topics/wnv.asp and report the following:

- ◆ Your name and phone number
- ◆ Bird’s location: street address and zip code
- ◆ Kind of bird
- ◆ Condition of bird (freshly dead, no trauma, no maggots, etc.)

Please **DO NOT bring birds to any Health District office** unless you are requested to do so!

Always use precautions when handling any dead animal.

Wear gloves or use a shovel to put the bird into a plastic bag. Put that bag into another plastic bag and close tightly.

- ◆ **If the bird is testable**, but arrangements for collection cannot be made promptly, place the bagged bird in the freezer immediately.
- ◆ **If the bird is not testable**, you should put the dead bird into your trash.
- ◆ **Wash your hands thoroughly.**

Corvid Birds



Magpie



Raven



Crow



Stellar’s Jay

Additional Information & Resources

Spokane Regional Health District

- ◆ www.srhd.org
- ◆ West Nile Information Line: 323-2847
- ◆ Environmental Health Division, 324-1560, ext. #7
Prevention, mosquito habitat reduction, personal protection, and mosquito/dead bird surveillance issues
- ◆ Epidemiology Center, 324-1442
Human risk of infection or disease information

Washington State Department of Ecology

- ◆ Best management practices for mosquito control www.ecy.wa.gov (type “Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control” in the search box) or call 329-3400 to obtain a current copy of this document

Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ Regional office, 892-1001
Stocking ponds with fish for mosquito control

Washington State Dept. of Agriculture

- ◆ Pesticide Management Division, 533-2690
Safe & legal use of pesticides

Horse and other animal concerns/ vaccinations:

www.agr.wa.gov (type “West Nile Virus” in the search box). Or consult your local veterinarian.

Additional Resources

Public drainage swales that don't drain in the expected 72 hour time frame

- ◆ City of Spokane - 625-7900
- ◆ City of Spokane Valley - 921-1000
- ◆ Spokane County - 477-3600

Mosquito control district:

Currently there are no mosquito control districts in Spokane County.

- ◆ For information on forming a district, call the Spokane County Auditor's office at 477-2260, ext. #4 about the petition process.
- ◆ www.doh.wa.gov (type “Mosquito Control District” in the search box)

Obtaining a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit:

- ◆ Jon Jennings at Washington State Department of Ecology - (360) 407-6283