What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a virus carried by mosquitoes. West Nile virus can cause serious illness in humans.

Where did it come from?

The virus has been found in the Middle East, Africa, and West Asia since the 1930s. West Nile virus was first found in the United States in 1999.

West Nile first appeared in California in 2003, and is here to stay. It is a seasonal disease that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall. In some parts of California, people can be infected with West Nile virus year-round.

How Does Infection occur?

You can get West Nile virus if an infected mosquito bites you.

People over age 50 are more likely to become very sick or die if they get infected by West Nile virus. In 2004, over 70 percent of the West Nile virus fatalities were in people over the age of 50.

Most people are bitten doing everyday activities around their own home like gardening, sitting outside, and barbequing. **Keeping mosquitoes from biting you reduces your risk of getting West Nile virus.**

Symptoms of West Nile Virus

Symptoms of West Nile virus usually will appear 3 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Most people with West Nile virus will not have any symptoms. **However, older people or the immune-compromised, such as those on cancer chemotherapy, are more likely to get West Nile virus.**

Common symptoms of West Nile virus include fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes skin rashes or swollen lymph nodes. These symptoms may last a few days, but there are reports of prolonged fatigue and muscle weakness.

Serious symptoms include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness, loss of vision, convulsions, numbness, and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks and can cause permanent nervous system damage.

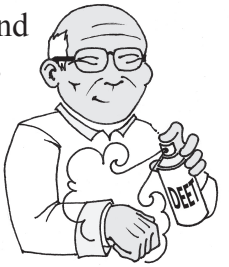
Seek medical attention right away if you have any of these symptoms.

West Nile virus infection can sometimes be fatal. There is no specific treatment for West Nile virus infection and there is no human vaccine.

Do not take a chance. While the risk of getting West Nile virus from a mosquito bite is small, it is easy to protect yourself from infection.

Practice the three "Ds"

To help protect yourself and others from West Nile virus, use repellents that contain **DEET,** Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus before going outdoors.



Fix or replace missing or torn **DOOR** and window screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home. Offer to help neighbors fix their screens.

DRAIN standing water in and around your yard so mosquitoes will not have a place to lay their eggs. Change water in pet dishes, birdbaths, plants, and flower containers weekly. Keep gutters free from leaves and debris. Help others in your neighborhood to "mosquito proof" their yards, too.

Help Your Community !

You can help your community fight West Nile virus. Report dead birds by calling the California West Nile Virus Dead Bird Hotline at **1-877-WNV-BIRD** or report online at: **www.westnile.ca.gov**

For Further Information

The following sources can help you learn more about West Nile virus.

California Department of Health Services
877-WNV-BIRD
www.westnile.ca.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
800-CDC-INFO
www.cdc.gov/westnile

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
State of California

Kimberly Belshé, Secretary
Health and Human Services Agency

Sandra Shewry, Director
California Department of Health Services

Published by the
State of California
Department of Health Services
Vector-Borne Disease Section
(916) 552-9730

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What You Need To Know

West Nile Virus Information for Seniors