

What is West Nile Virus? Where did it come from?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus commonly found in Africa, West Asia and the Middle East. It was first identified in the United States in August of 1999 in New York State.

How do people get West Nile Virus?

People become infected with West Nile Virus from the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by biting birds, which have previously been infected with WNV. There is no evidence that a person can get the virus from handling infected birds.

What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus?

Most infections are mild. Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, skin rashes and swollen lymph glands. When more severe illness occurs, symptoms range from fever, rash and headache to meningitis, encephalitis, coma and on rare occasions, death.

Who is at risk for getting West Nile Virus?

Risk among individuals in the general population is very low. However, people over the age of 50 and those with weak immune systems are at greater risk for more serious illness.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for West Nile Virus, nor is there a vaccine. Most people recover completely within two weeks. In more severe infections, intensive supportive therapy may be needed.

Can birds or other animals get West Nile Virus?

Crows, gulls, ducks, chickens, hawks, and horses are among animals that are known to harbor West Nile Virus. But only a few species actually show symptoms, and only a few have enough virus in their blood to allow mosquitoes that feed on them to become infected. In a limited number of studies on domestic animals, infected dogs showed minimal to no symptoms.

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY RISK OF BECOMING INFECTED WITH WEST NILE VIRUS?

To reduce the annoyance of mosquito bites and prevent transmission of WNV and other mosquito-borne infections, some common sense measures can be taken, including:

- ✦ Reduce mosquito breeding on your property by eliminating standing water that collects in boats, buckets, tires, flowerpots and other containers.
- ✦ Clean clogged roof gutters.
- ✦ Empty plastic pools when not in use and drain swimming pool covers.
- ✦ Change water in birdbaths weekly, and flush sump pits.
- ✦ Stock ornamental ponds with goldfish.
- ✦ Check and repair screens and screen doors.
- ✦ Limit outdoor activity during dusk, dawn, and early evening when mosquitoes are most active.
- ✦ Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks when you are outdoors. Avoid areas with heavy underbrush and trees.
- ✦ Using insect repellents that contain 20-30 % DEET can be very effective in preventing insect bites. **Read the product label carefully. Insect repellents such as those that contain DEET are not to be applied to bare skin. Consult with your child's doctor prior to using on children. Do not use insect repellents on children less than three years old.**

What is Atlantic County Government doing?

The **Mosquito Control Unit** uses an Integrated Pest Management approach to provide countywide relief from mosquitoes and protection from mosquito-borne disease. Activities include eliminating breeding sources with environmentally sound water management, carefully targeted application of state and federally approved insecticides, and introduction of mosquito predators to breeding sites. Mosquito control activities are based on a strong surveillance program which monitors both mosquito populations and disease activity in mosquitoes.

The **Division of Public Health** investigates suspected cases of disease in humans and birds, provides public education to prevent illness, and responds to complaints of mosquito breeding on private and public properties.

For more information contact:

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Environmental Health Unit**
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Northfield, NJ 08225
609-645-5971

**Atlantic County Department of Public Works
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OR

Visit Atlantic County's site on the Internet:
www.aclink.org

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **WEST NILE VIRUS**

