

# West Nile Virus Season is here Again; Are You Prepared?

## PART II – Symptoms, Treatment, and Resources

### What Are the Symptoms of WNV?

People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito.



According to the CDC, most people who are bitten by a carrier mosquito do not exhibit any symptoms. Those who do get sick typically have only mild symptoms such as fever, headache, body ache and a skin rash. The worst-case scenarios involve West Nile encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain) and West Nile meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and the spinal cord). Both are forms of a severe disease that affect a person's nervous system.

**Serious Symptoms** *in a few people:* About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include:

- high fever
- headache
- neck stiffness
- stupor
- disorientation
- coma
- tremors
- convulsions
- muscle weakness
- vision loss
- numbness
- paralysis

These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

**Milder Symptoms** *in some people:* Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as:

- fever
- headache
- body aches
- nausea
- vomiting
- sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.

**No Symptoms** *in most people*: Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

People over the age of 50 are more likely to develop serious symptoms of WNV if they do get sick and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

### ***Is there treatment for WNV?***

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In milder cases, people will experience symptoms such as fever and aches that will pass on their own. There have been healthy people who have become sick for several weeks. In more severe cases, people may need to go the hospital in order to receive supportive treatment such as intravenous fluids, help with breathing and nursing care. Milder cases will improve on their own and do not necessarily require medical attention. If you develop severe symptoms, seek medical attention immediately. Severe WNV illness usually requires hospitalization.

### ***Are there other ways to get West Nile than from mosquitoes?***

Yes. In a *very small* number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby. The risk of getting WNV from a blood transfusion is very rare. Blood banks test all donated blood for AIDS, hepatitis, and WNV. Organ donors are screened to identify infectious risks on the basis of national organ procurement standards. In the case of pregnancy and breastfeeding, in 2002 one case was reported. According to the reports, the infant was born with West Nile virus infection and severe medical problems. However, it goes on to say that, it is unclear whether West Nile virus infection caused these problems or whether they were due to other causes. For more on this story go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/breastfeeding.htm>

Contrary to what you may have been taught, West Nile virus *is not* spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

So, in closing, as the nicer weather begins to show itself, please be aware of your surroundings. Whether it's a leisurely walk in the early morning or at dusk, those picnics in the park, back yard barbeque fun, or an outdoor sporting event, please remember to protect you and your loved ones from those annoying, and potentially dangerous pests!

***For additional information on West Nile Virus, please visit our website's WNV resource page at [http://www.kingscountyoe.com/CountyKings/wnv\\_resources.htm](http://www.kingscountyoe.com/CountyKings/wnv_resources.htm)***

**Additional Resources:**

Kids can learn how to protect themselves from mosquito bites on "[The Buzz-z-z-z on West Nile Virus](#)" (on BAM! the CDC site for kids).

CDC West Nile Virus: Questions & Answers

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect\\_repellent.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm)

CDC West Nile Virus: What You Need To Know

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv\\_factsheet.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv_factsheet.htm)

**References:**

*Kings County Office of Emergency Management Website- [www.kingscountyoem.com](http://www.kingscountyoem.com)*

*California West Nile Virus Website- [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)*

*Drug Information Online- [www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com)*

*California Department of Food and Agriculture- <http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/>*