



# WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) in humans and other animals. The virus is named after the West Nile region of Uganda where it was first isolated in 1937. The virus appeared for the first time in the United States during a 1999 outbreak in New York that killed seven people.

## HOW IS WEST NILE VIRUS SPREAD?

West Nile virus is spread to humans, birds and other animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that is carrying the virus. In a very small number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breast feeding and during pregnancy.

## WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF GETTING WEST NILE VIRUS?

In areas where West Nile virus has been detected, only a small proportion of mosquitoes are likely to be infected. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not become sick.

- Approximately 1 in 1000 mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus.
- 1% of people bitten actually get sick.
- 5 to 15% of those have serious conditions or die

Source: National Safety Council, Environmental Health Center

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms generally appear about 3 to 6 days after exposure. People over age 50 are at greater risk of severe illness.

Milder symptoms include

Slight fever

Headache

Body aches

Swollen glands

Sometimes a skin rash

Severe symptoms include

High fever

Intense headache

Stiff neck

Confusion

*Healthy children and adults may not have any symptoms.*

## PREVENT

The Cleveland Department of Public Health is encouraging the public to eliminate mosquito breeding areas around the home. The species of mosquitoes that most likely carry West Nile virus can breed in your own backyard.

### Control Mosquitoes from Breeding

Turn over or remove containers in your yard where rainwater collects, such as potted plant trays, buckets or toys.

Empty birdbaths at least once a week.

Remove old tires from your yard.

Drain wading pools often.

Clean roof gutters and downspout screens.

Eliminate standing water on flat roofs.

Do not allow water to collect in garbage cans.

### Protect Yourself and Your Family

Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing.

If possible, stay indoors when mosquitoes are biting.

Use insect repellent products containing DEET or other EPA registered active ingredient.

Only adults should apply repellent on children.

Spray repellent on your hands and then apply to your face.

Only apply repellent to exposed skin and clothing. Do not use repellent under clothes.

Use repellent according to manufacturer's directions.