

Where can I get more information?

Rutgers University Mosquito Research and Control Unit
Phone: (732) 932-9341

Centers for Disease Control, Web site Address:
<http://www.cdc.gov> Then press "Health Topics"

Bergen County Department of Health Services
<http://www.bergenhealth.org>

Bergen County Mosquito Control Division
Phone: (201) 599-6141

Bergen County Office of Emergency Management
<http://www.bcoem.org>

Frequently Asked Questions About West Nile Virus



Developed under the auspices of the Bergen County Executive
and the Board of Chosen Freeholders

Bergen County Department of Health Services
327 E. Ridgewood Avenue
Paramus, New Jersey 07652-4895
(201) 599-6100

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 the late summer of 1999.

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 are infected with the virus. Some birds may die of the disease, but they are not known to transmit the disease to humans.

What are the symptoms of West Nile virus?

Not all humans infected with the West Nile virus become ill. Most infections are mild. Symptoms may develop within three to 15 days. When symptoms develop, they may include fever, headache, stiff neck, muscle weakness, and mental confusion. In rare cases more severe infections may result in high fever, tremors, disorientation, and other signs of increasing illness. Symptoms should be evaluated by your health care provider.

Who is at risk for getting West Nile virus?

People who live or work in areas where active cases have been identified are at risk of getting West Nile virus if bitten by an infected mosquito. 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.

What can I do to reduce my risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus?

There are many things you can do to reduce your risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus such as:

- To reduce mosquito breeding on your property, eliminate standing water by disposing of empty cans, buckets, flowerpots, old tires, trash cans, etc.
- Clean clogged roof gutters.
- Empty plastic pools when not in use and drain swimming pool covers.
- At least weekly, change water in bird baths and flush sump pits.
- Stock ornamental ponds with goldfish.
- Check and repair screens and screen doors.
- Stay indoors during dawn, dusk and early evening when mosquitoes are active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when you are outdoors. Avoid areas with heavy underbrush and trees.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. Be sure to follow the manufacturers' instructions carefully.
- Effective insect repellents will contain 20% to 30% of DEET. DEET is the active ingredient in insect repellents.
- Avoid applying repellent on or near the mouth and eye areas as it may cause irritation.
- Avoid applying repellent on the hands of children to avoid eye or mouth irritation.
- **Do not** apply insect repellents on children less than three years old.
- Insect repellents containing permethrin may be sprayed on clothing to help prevent mosquitoes from biting through cloth.