



ALAMEDA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a disease that is spread by mosquitoes. WNV first appeared in the United States in 1999. Since then it has spread across the United States to California. Since then, WNV has continued to occur during the height of mosquito season. The impact varies from region to region.

What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus?

Most healthy people who become infected with the virus don't have any symptoms. Mild symptoms include fever, headache and body aches, and sometimes a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. Severe symptoms include high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, convulsions, muscle weakness, coma, and paralysis. This severe form of the disease may last several weeks and some nervous system effects may be permanent. A small number of cases are fatal. People over 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

How is the West Nile Virus spread?

Birds are the main carriers of WNV. When a mosquito bites an infected bird, the mosquito can then spread the virus by biting another bird or a human. West Nile virus is not contagious; there is no current evidence it is spread person to person.

How is West Nile Virus treated?

Mild cases respond well to the same kinds of common treatments used for headache, fever and body aches. The more severe forms of the illness usually require hospitalization. In rare situations, WNV can cause death. There is currently no vaccine for humans against WNV.

What prevention and protection against WNV is there?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following three steps to reduce your West Nile virus risk:

1. Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Spray. Use insect repellent that has DEET on exposed skin when you go outdoors. Be sure to read

and follow the manufacturer's DIRECTIONS FOR USE, especially when using on children.

- Cover up. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks while outdoors.
- Avoid mosquitoes. Many mosquitoes bite during dusk and dawn. Limit time outdoors during these hours. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors.

2. Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- Fix screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by repairing holes in screen or installing door screens.
- Drain standing water. Any small amount of standing water can be enough for a mosquito to lay eggs.
- Be vigilant. Empty water from buckets, cans, pool covers, flowerpots, birdbaths and other items. Throw away or cover up stored tires. Clean pet or livestock bowls weekly. Check for clogged rain gutters.

3. Help Your Community

- Report dead birds. Dead birds can help identify if WNV is present. Call the Vector Control District to report the location of a dead bird.
- Identify standing water. Encourage your neighbors to empty standing water. Notify the Vector Control District to report neglected pools, ponds or other standing water.

4. Report a Dead Bird

- Alameda County Mosquito Abatement District: 510 783-7744
- City of Albany only: Vector Control – 510 567.7800
- California Dept. of Health Services: 877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473) or go online [to report a dead bird or squirrel](#).

Want more information?

- [Alameda County Mosquito Abatement](#)
- [Vector Control](#)
- [California Dept. of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#)