

For more extensive information on West Nile virus and mosquito prevention, visit our web site at:

www.elpasotexas.gov/health/westnile.asp

Web site topics include:

- Mosquito prevention and control
- Disease symptoms
- Questions and answers
- Children's health
- Kid's educational pages
- Senior's health
- Home prevention tips and checklist
- Downloadable materials
- News releases
- Government agency listings



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Dial 2-1-1

To report mosquito breeding, call the City of El Paso Environmental Services Department at (915) 599-6290.

This Fight the Bite educational campaign is brought to you by The City of El Paso Department of Public Health.

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**FIGHT
THE BITE!**



**JOIN THE
"SWAT TEAM"**

**AGAINST
WEST NILE
VIRUS**



FIGHT THE BITE!

West Nile virus is a disease that can be passed to humans by mosquitoes. While it has been common in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East for decades, it first appeared in the U.S. in 1999 in New York. It has since traveled westward across the U.S. and now is in Texas.

It is very rare to catch this virus, and most infected people will not even get sick or will only experience mild flu-like symptoms. However, in rare cases, West Nile virus can be fatal.

The City of El Paso Department of Public Health hopes to inform the public so that everyone can take appropriate prevention measures.

HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS:

The virus is carried long distances by infected birds and then spread locally by mosquitoes that bite these birds. The mosquitoes can then pass the virus to humans and animals, but primarily to birds and horses.

There is a vaccine for horses. A human vaccine is being developed, but won't be available for several years. Dogs and cats can be infected, but rarely become ill and don't spread the virus.

Some mosquitoes survive as adults throughout the year, but are most active during the spring, summer and fall, and are more prevalent during the monsoon season.

MOSQUITO PREVENTION:

- Limit time spent outdoors at dawn or dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and long pants while outdoors.
- Spray clothing with insect repellent containing DEET, since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain up to 35 percent DEET. Use products with 10 percent DEET or less for children.
- Always read and follow product directions.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out.

DON'T BREED MOSQUITOES:

Mosquitoes lay eggs in still water which hatch in one to seven days depending on water temperature. Frequently getting rid of standing water can prevent mosquitoes from breeding in the first place.

Here are some things you can do:

- Remove standing water in ponds, ditches, gutters, flower pots, puddles, tires, and cans.
- Check unusual items that might contain water such as wheelbarrows, hubcaps, toys, garden equipment, pool covers, and plastic sheeting. Turn these items upside down to prevent them from holding water.
- Drill drainage holes in tire swings.
- Check water in birdbaths and wading pools weekly for mosquito larvae. Empty the water if they are present.
- Stock ornamental ponds, fountains, and livestock water tanks with fish that eat mosquito larvae or treat them with BTI, a natural bacteria that kills larvae. This can be purchased at garden and home stores or feed and supply stores.
- Do not overwater lawns and gardens.
- Trim shrubbery and remove garden debris.
- Take extra care if you live or work near irrigated farm areas or use water from irrigation canals to flood residential properties.



RISKS AND SYMPTOMS:

Only certain types of mosquitoes pass the virus to people and only a small percentage of these mosquitoes carry the virus. Most people will not become ill. Symptoms generally appear three to 14 days after exposure.

All residents of areas where West Nile virus activity has been confirmed are at risk, but people over 50 seem to get the severe forms of the disease more than others.

In people who become ill, most will have mild symptoms including fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally, skin rashes or swollen lymph nodes.

However, this virus can cause serious illnesses including encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and/or meningitis (swelling of the brain's lining).

Serious symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness, muscle weakness and tremors, disorientation, seizures, and coma. Severe infections can result in permanent brain damage or, in rare cases, even death.

People with these severe symptoms need to seek medical attention immediately.

FINDING DEAD BIRDS:

West Nile virus is spread to humans mainly through the bite from an infected mosquito. There is no evidence that West Nile virus can be spread from person to person or from animal to person. The safe bet would be to handle dead birds wearing latex/plastic exam gloves or even kitchen type gloves and disposing of them in the trash by first placing them inside a plastic bag. The gloves can then be washed or disposed of after use. The primary types of birds that suffer the most from West Nile virus are crows, jays and raptors (birds of prey, like hawks and eagles).

