

# MOSQUITOES AND WEST NILE VIRUS

## Mosquitoes in Washington



Not only a nuisance, mosquitoes can pose a serious health threat to people. Diseases like West Nile virus (WNV) can be spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito.

## West Nile Virus

### What is West Nile virus?

- West Nile virus (WNV) is a virus carried by mosquitoes that can cause serious, even fatal, illness in humans and animals.
- The virus is most often found in south central Washington, and less commonly in other parts of the state. Illness due to WNV occurs during mosquito season, roughly June through October.

### How is it spread?

- WNV is almost always spread to people and animals by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected after feeding on birds that carry the virus. WNV is not spread by direct contact with infected people or animals.

### What are the symptoms?

- Most people who are infected with WNV will not get sick. Some infected people develop fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Most people recover completely.
- Very few people will have more severe symptoms, such as headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and coma. For a small number of people, the disease can be very serious and lead to permanent neurologic effects or death.
- If you experience symptoms of WNV, contact your healthcare provider.

### Who is at risk?

- People over the age of 60 years and people with certain medical conditions are at greater risk of serious illness.

## Prevent Mosquito Bites

Mosquitoes need water to breed and grow. You can **prevent mosquitoes by getting rid of places where water collects** around your home.

- Empty sources of standing water in your yard.
- Cover any standing water that cannot be emptied or turned over.
- Get rid of old tires, buckets, or other debris.
- Clean clogged gutters to allow drainage
- Change water in bird baths or animal troughs at least twice a week.
- Repair leaky faucets and sprinklers.



### Keep mosquitoes outside:

- Use screens on windows and doors, and repair holes in screens. Close windows and doors when possible.

### Cover up:

- Wear long pants, long sleeves, a hat, and closed shoes in areas with mosquitoes. Treat clothing with permethrin to kill or repel mosquitoes.



### Use repellent:

- Insect repellents help protect against mosquito bites. Apply repellent when you are spending time in areas with mosquitoes.
- EPA-registered insect repellents are tested and approved for safety and are effective when used according to the directions on the label.
- Active ingredients in EPA-registered insect repellents include DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or 2-undecanone.



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