

WEST NILE VIRUS

The following information has been issued from the Bergen County Department of Health Services as public information:

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 U.S. 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 fifteen (3 - 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 healthcare 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, supportive therapy may be needed.

What can I do to reduce my risk for 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, flower pots, 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 pools with goldfish.
- Check and repair screens and screen doors.
- Stay indoors when mosquitoes are most active; which is usually at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when you are outdoors. Avoid areas with heavy underbrush and trees.
- Insect repellents containing permethrin may be sprayed on clothing to help prevent mosquitoes from biting through cloth.

Who do I call if I find a dead crow in my yard or in the street? (Crows are large, black birds whose overall length is generally the distance between a person's hand and elbow). Call the Wyckoff Police Department at 201-891-2121. For all other dead birds, a resident should wear gloves and place the dead bird in a double bag and place it in their trash can.

Where can I get more information?

- Bergen County West Nile Virus Hotline (phone: 201-225-7000)
- Bergen County Department of Health Services (www.bergenhealth.org/lincs or phone: 201-599-6100)
- Bergen County Mosquito Control Division (phone: 201-599-6141)
- Bergen County Office of Emergency Management (www.bcoem.org)
- Rutgers University Mosquito Research & Control Unit (phone: 732-932-9341)
- Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov go to >Health Topics)
- State of New Jersey (www.state.nj.us/health)
- Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov/pesticides)