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## Information on West Nile Virus (WNV)

### What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause serious illness. People and animals contract the disease from the infected mosquitoes. At this time, there is no human vaccine for the disease.



### How is WNV Transmitted?

WNV lives in infected birds. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on those birds. The infected mosquitoes can then transmit the virus to humans and other animals while biting to take blood. Once in the bloodstream, the virus may multiply and cause illness.

### What are the Symptoms of WNV?

Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not become ill. However, some may experience a fever, headache and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach, or back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days or as long as several weeks.

Some people infected with WNV will develop serious illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness, and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent. In severe cases, WNV can lead to death. People of any age can contract the virus, but the illness can be more serious for people over the age of 50. ***It is important to realize that less than 1% of persons infected with WNV will develop severe illness.***

### How Long Does it take for Symptoms of WNV Infection to Appear?

People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by an infected mosquito.

### What Should You Do if You Think You have WNV?

Milder WNV illness improves on its own, and people do not necessarily need to seek medical attention for this infection, though they may choose to do so. If you develop symptoms of severe WNV illness, such as unusually severe headaches or confusion, seek medical attention immediately. Severe WNV illness usually requires hospitalization.

District Seven Health Department **does not** have physicians on staff and does not provide testing for WNV infection. Individuals should contact their physician or health care provider.

## **WNV in Idaho**

As of August 4, 2006, WNV has discovered in 18 of Idaho's 44 counties. Fifty-four humans have been affected by the disease, as well as numerous horses, birds, and mosquito pools. For West Nile Virus activity in Idaho, visit [www.westnile.idaho.gov](http://www.westnile.idaho.gov).

## **What can You Do to Protect Yourself from WNV?**

It's important for people to protect themselves from contracting this potentially dangerous virus by:



- Covering up exposed skin when outdoors;
- Applying insect repellent approved by the EPA to exposed skin and clothing. Follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Avoid mosquitoes when they are most active at dawn and dusk;
- Insect-proof your home by repairing or replacing screens; and
- Reduce or eliminate standing water on your property that might provide breeding habitat for mosquitoes such as bird baths and decorative ponds.

## **What is Mosquito Surveillance?**

In the past, Health Districts across Idaho conducted mosquito surveillance for WNV by trapping mosquitoes and sending them to the State Lab in Boise for testing. This year, no mosquito surveillance will be conducted by the Health Districts. Some mosquito abatement districts in the state are conducting mosquito surveillance.

## **Who is Testing Dead Birds for WNV?**

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is responsible for testing dead corvids (crows, ravens, jays, magpies) and raptors (owls, hawks, eagles) for WNV. Please contact the Fish and Game's regional offices in Idaho Falls (525-7290) or Salmon (756-2271) to report any dead corvids or raptors.

## **Where Can You Get More Information?**

For more information about WNV, contact **Ken Anderson** or **Mike Taylor**, District Seven Health Department's epidemiologists, at **522-0310** or visit the health department's website at [www.state.id.us/phd7](http://www.state.id.us/phd7).

For information on WNV activity in Idaho, visit [www.westnile.idaho.gov](http://www.westnile.idaho.gov).

For detailed statistics, surveillance, and prevention information on WNV, access the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile).