

Are You at Risk of Getting West Nile Virus?

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Are You at Risk of Getting West Nile Virus?

By Allen Weber

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Like an annual Methuselah, the West Nile Virus is again rearing its ugly head. It is transmitted by mosquitos. Hungry Mosquitos, hoards of them just waiting for that unsuspecting person or animal that is anywhere near their path around dusk or dawn.

According to the Center for Disease Control West Nile Virus has been plaguing Africa (where it was first discovered in Uganda in 1937). It has been reported in the Middle East; west and central Asia; Oceania; Europe, and starting in 1999 North America. It has been reported in virtually every state throughout the East Coast and Mid-Western United States. Soon it will also hit the West Coast. It is a threat to public, equine, and animal health. The most serious risk in humans and horses when infected is fatal encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Death also happens to infected domestic and wild birds.

If you live in an area where they have discovered West Nile Virus activity, you are at risk of getting West Nile encephalitis; persons older than 50 years have the highest risk of severe disease.

West Nile Virus is spread exclusively thru bites by mosquitos, though some ticks have been discovered carrying West Nile Virus in their blood. However, now it is not believed that ticks pose any risk of infection.

So How do you avoid getting West Nile Virus?

The obvious answer is to avoid getting bitten by a mosquito. You can curtail all outdoor activity around dawn and dusk. No more jogging in the park, barbequing dinner, late evening softball, etc. So you can hide inside and become a shut in out of fear. You can coat yourself with chemical insect repellants, or you can look for natural methods.

Most methods of avoiding mosquito bites are using hazardous, noxious and harsh chemicals. Still, there is an all natural inexpensive way to ward off mosquitos and avoid getting bitten. In researching my ebook, "Vinegar Magic" <http://www.vinegarmagic.com> one of the many uses of vinegar I heard of was using apple cider vinegar to stop mosquitos from attacking. I didn't believe it, so I tried it on

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myself. Every day for a week I drank two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar in 8 ounces of water. Let me tell you, I noticed a difference. I can be outside barbequing at dusk. I'll see a mosquito making a bee line at me. It gets close and then suddenly, as if by magic it makes a U-turn and flies away. It's like I have a magic protective shield around me.

Most municipalities will begin fogging areas for mosquitos with chemical pesticides once they have discovered West Nile virus. That usually means at least one person has been bitten. The incubation period in humans meaning the time from infection to when you see disease symptoms for West Nile encephalitis usually runs three to 15 days. Why run the risk of waiting to become a victim?

Symptoms of West Nile Virus

Most infections are mild, and symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with skin rash and swollen lymph glands. More severe infection may be marked by headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and, rarely, death.

Better to not take the risk and drink apple cider vinegar. While the prospect of drinking two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar may sound like a disgusting horrible taste, two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar when mixed into eight or 10 or 12 ounces of water does not taste bad. In fact, you can hardly taste the vinegar. Another tip is to mix some apple cider vinegar in your pet's food. It can help protect them from mosquitos and flies as well. You can find some companies selling apple cider vinegar capsules as a diet aid. (Apple cider vinegar for dieting is also mentioned in my ebook entitled "Vinegar Magic".)

Like they say about Chicken soup, "It couldn't hurt." Be careful when using vinegar. Remember it is acidic so don't take to much thru the day. Think of it like salad dressing without the oil and salad. Like all things use common sense. If you have stomach or other problems, check with your professional care giver.

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The History of the West Nile Virus

By Karen Foster

Where did it come from?

The West Nile virus was first isolated in 1937 in the West Nile district of Uganda. The disease has spread through many parts of Europe and Asia, as well as North and South America.

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How did it spread?

We do not know exactly how the virus spread but there are several theories. Most likely the West Nile virus was imported to other countries by a bird or mosquito that was infected by the disease. The virus has been found in over 150 different types of birds including: crows, ravens, blue jays and magpies. Out of the 74 different species of mosquitoes found in all parts of Canada, only ten have been found to carry the West Nile virus.

How is the West Nile virus transmitted?

Mosquitoes become carriers of the West Nile virus after feeding on the blood of birds infected with the virus. The West Nile virus is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Recently, scientists have discovered that people can become infected with the West Nile virus through other ways like blood transfusions and organ/tissue transplants. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the disease can be contracted by kissing or touching someone who is infected with it.

The West Nile virus poses the greatest risk to those with weakened immune systems or chronic disease and the risk of serious health issues pertaining to the virus increase with age. The risk of being infected with the West Nile virus is greatest during July and August, peak mosquito season. However, it is good to keep in mind that mosquito season lasts from as early as mid April until after the first hard frost usually in October.

Stopping the spread

The very best way to avoid contacting the West Nile virus is by minimizing your exposure to mosquitoes. Other ways to help stop the spread of the West Nile virus include:

- Eliminate mosquito breeding grounds around your home (these include places where standing water can collect such as wading pools, empty flower pots and bird baths)
- Report any dead birds found in your area to the local authorities.
- Use insect repellants that contain DEET and install screens in your windows and doors
- Use mosquito netting when camping

Keep in mind that although the West Nile virus is not likely to disappear any time in the near future, it is important to remember that the risk of contacting the West Nile virus is low and the risk of serious health effects from the disease even lower.

Karen Foster is the content manager and editor for Tiny Mosquito: Understanding the Mosquito. For more information about mosquitoes, visit her site at

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