

West Nile Virus (WNV) Fact Sheet 2018

For more information, please contact Montgomery County Office of Public Health (610) 278-5117



Did you know?

- Mosquitoes can begin to multiply in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than four days!
- Mosquito breeding sites can be anywhere.

Take action to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home.

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The West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause brain inflammation (encephalitis). Cases in Pennsylvania occur primarily in the late summer or early fall.

What are the symptoms of WNV?

The majority of people who are infected with WNV (approximately 80%) will have no symptoms. A smaller number of people who become infected (~ 20%) will have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands. They may also develop a skin rash on the chest, stomach, and back.

Some people are at higher risk to get severe illness:

- **People over 60:** People over age 60 are more likely to develop serious symptoms of WNV. They should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.
- **People with certain medical conditions:** These conditions include cancer, hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease, and people who have received organ transplants.
- **Being outside means you are at risk:** The more time you spend outdoors, the greater the chance of being bitten by an infected mosquito. Pay attention to avoid mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing.
- **Risk through medical procedures is very low:** All donated blood is checked for WNV before being used. The risk of getting WNV through blood transfusions and organ transplants is very small and should not prevent people who need surgery from having it.

What should I do if I think I have symptoms of WNV?

Contact your physician or health care provider.

How are West Nile Virus infections treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infections. People with mild WNV infections usually recover on their own. People with severe WNV infections almost always require hospitalization. Their symptoms may last several weeks and neurological effects may be permanent. Approximately 10% of people who develop severe illness will die from the infection.

How many cases of West Nile Virus occur in the U.S.?

In 2016, 2,038 human cases of WNV were reported in the United States and 94 patients died. In 2016, Pennsylvania had 16 human cases of WNV, two of which were residents of Montgomery County.

What can I do to reduce my risk of getting WNV?

- Make sure your gutters and drainpipes are clean and running freely.
- Check and repair windows and screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering the home.
- Assess your property and remove containers that collect standing water such as old tires, cans, bottles, buckets, toys, kiddie pools, pool covers, and empty plant containers.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin (*Follow label directions carefully*).
- Avoid being outside during peak hours (*dawn and dusk*).