

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: West Nile Virus



Several years ago we heard about a mosquito problem that could result in a sickness called the West Nile Virus. This sickness could be serious, but since it hadn't happened in Mississippi, it was lightly regarded. However, that was then; but now it has hit home with several reported cases each year for the past several years.

## What is the West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness. Experts believe WNV is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall. This fact sheet contains important information that can help you recognize and prevent West Nile Virus.

## What can I do to prevent WNV?

Obviously, the best prevention is to not get mosquito bitten.

- Outdoors – Use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient and follow the instructions on the package.
- Mosquitoes are most active between dawn and dusk. During this time you should take extra precaution to wear repellent and long-sleeved shirts and pants. Consider staying indoors as much as possible during these hours.
- Make sure that you have good screens on all your windows and good screens on your doors as well.
- Eliminate all mosquito breeding areas around your property, such as old buckets, flower pots that hold water, or maybe old tires. Change pet water dishes and replace the water weekly in the birdbaths.

## What are the symptoms of WNV?

- **Serious symptoms in a Few People** – Approximately 1 out of every 150 people infected with WNV will develop a serious sickness. These symptoms can include high fever, convulsions, headaches, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, comas, tremors, vision loss, muscle weakness, numbness, and paralysis. These symptoms can last for several weeks and neurological effects can be permanent.
- **Milder symptoms in some people** – About 20% of the people who become infected have symptoms of fever, headaches, vomiting and sometimes will have swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, back, and stomach. The symptoms can last for as short as a few days, but even healthy people can be sick for several weeks.
- **No symptoms in most people** – Approximately 80% of people (4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

## How does West Nile Virus spread?

- **Infected Mosquitoes** – Most of the time WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquito is usually infected from biting into an infected bird. The mosquito then bites an animal or human.
- **Transfusions, transplants and mother to child** – In remote cases, WNV has been spread by blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby.
- **Not Through touching** – WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

**How soon do People become Infected** – Symptoms usually develop between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by an infected mosquito.

## How do you treat WNV Infections?

- There is no specific treatment for WNV infection.
- In cases with milder symptoms such as fever and aches, it will pass on its own; however, healthy people can remain sick for several weeks.
- In more severe cases, people need to go to the hospital where they can receive supportive treatment including intravenous fluids and help with breathing and nursing care.

## What is the risk of getting sick from WNV?

- **People over 50 at higher risk to get severe illness** – People over 50 are at a higher risk and should take special cautions to avoid mosquito bites.
- **Being outside means you're at risk** – Obviously, the more time you spend outdoors, the more likely you are to be bitten by an infected mosquito. Pay attention when you're outside working or playing to avoid bites.
- **Through medical procedures is very low** – All blood donations are checked for WNV before they are used. The risk of getting WNV through blood transfusions or organ transplants is very small. This should not prevent people from having surgery, if they need it. Discussions with your doctor will usually alleviate any doubts.

## How often should you reapply repellent?

- **Long Periods** – If you are going to be outside for at least 3-4 hours, it is recommended to use a product with at least 20% DEET. (A product labeled with 50% DEET offers very little extra protection).
- **Short Periods** – For short periods, products with less than 20% DEET will usually be sufficient and products containing 7% picaridin or oil of eucalyptus may provide adequate protection.

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Excerpts: [www.cdc.gov/nicdod/dvbid](http://www.cdc.gov/nicdod/dvbid)  
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IMPRESSIONS!**