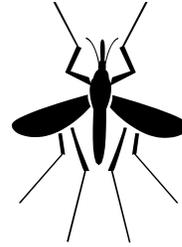


THE WEST NILE VIRUS

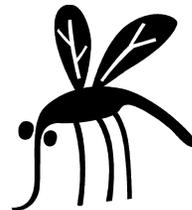


What Is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is a potentially deadly virus that can cause encephalitis, inflammation of the brain, or meningitis, inflammation of the spinal cord and lining of the brain. West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of mosquitoes who contract it by biting an infected bird. The virus cannot be transmitted directly from birds to people. Also, person to person contact does not spread the virus.

What Are The Symptoms?

A person suffering from West Nile Virus may demonstrate no symptoms at all. In about 20% of cases, victims developed mild symptoms such as fever, headaches and body aches along with a mild rash and swollen lymph glands. However, in some individuals, the virus can cause serious damage, causing the brain and spinal cord to swell and in its worst cases can be fatal. The symptoms of the more serious effects include rapid onset of severe headache, stiff neck, high fever, and loss of consciousness. Less than 1% of those infected develop serious illness from the virus. If illness were to occur the symptoms would be noticed within 5 to 15 days of being bitten by the infected mosquito.



Prevention and Control

Presently there is no vaccine for West Nile Virus and there is no specific treatment. There are, however, some methods to reduce your risk of becoming infected by the West Nile Virus. The main method of prevention is to avoid mosquito bites as well as possible. Since mosquitoes are most active between April and October, this is when you need to be most careful. Also, mosquitoes are more active and therefore more likely to bite in the early morning and the evening. If outside during these times wearing protective clothing such as long sleeve shirts, pants, and socks can help prevent mosquito bites. Also, the use of insect repellent can be an effective tool in the prevention of mosquito bites. If you believe you may have been exposed to West Nile Virus, notify your supervisor immediately. For more information concerning the West Nile Virus, contact the Environmental Health & Safety Department (3796).