



What are the symptoms of a West Nile Virus infection?

Thankfully most individuals who have West Nile Virus infections will have an asymptomatic infection or one which results in no signs or symptoms. However, in 20% of those with infections, individuals can develop a wide range of signs and symptoms. Early symptoms are similar to what would be experienced during a flu-like illness. Symptoms such as fever, sore muscles, fatigue, and sometimes a faint rash all are common early symptoms of West Nile Fever. If any of these symptoms develop this summer, it is important to contact your physician.

Someone who is infected with the West Nile Virus and develop signs and symptoms may have only relatively mild symptoms as listed above as West Nile Fever, but in other individuals, these symptoms will progress into a more severe form of an infection resulting in additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle soreness, severe fatigue, fever, and muscle pain. If any of these symptoms are developing, it is important to immediately seek medical attention. While there is no treatment for West Nile Virus infections, supporting care can be administered which can help alleviate and control the symptoms as best as possible.

How do I know whether I have a West Nile Virus Infection?

Because the symptoms of West Nile Virus infections are relatively similar to a number of other infections caused by other viruses or bacteria, only your physician can determine whether you have an infection due to the West Nile Virus. This is done by conducting a blood test which looks for either antibodies against West Nile Virus in your blood, or by looking for the virus itself through more sophisticated blood testing. Your physician can help determine whether your symptoms indicate that a blood test is necessary.

What can you do to reduce the risk of getting bitten by mosquitos? Do the following:

- **DUSK to DAWN** - is the time frame when mosquitoes, likely to carry infection, are most active. Stay indoors from dusk to dawn.
- **DRAIN** - standing water in your yard and neighborhood. Old tires, flowerpots, clogged rain gutters, leaky pipes and faucets, birdbaths and wading pools can be breeding sites for mosquitoes.

- **DRESS** - in light colored long sleeves and pants when you are outside, especially in mosquito infested areas.
- **DEET** (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) - if you are going to be outside when mosquitoes are most active, make sure you apply insect repellent that contains DEET. Read and follow label instructions. Spray both exposed skin and clothing with repellent when outdoors.

About DCMS: The Dallas County Medical Society unites and empowers physicians to support the health of all residents in the metropolitan region. DCMS is a professional organization of approximately 6,400 local physicians, medical students and residents dedicated to serving Dallas area patients.