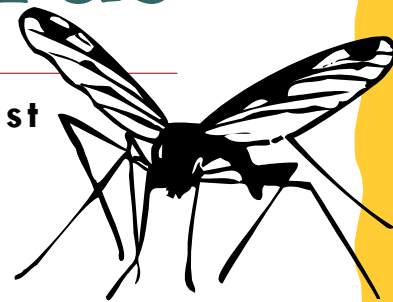


# West Nile Virus

From your friends @ HealthWorks Northwest  
[www.hwnw.org](http://www.hwnw.org)

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Here are some frequently asked questions about West Nile Virus and the potential for infection locally.



## FAQ

**Q:** *Could I be infected with West Nile virus and not know it?*

**A:** Yes. Based on research done experts now suspect that a larger percentage of those who are exposed to the virus get infected. But, fewer than 20% of them show any symptoms at all; and less than 1% go on to develop severe illness.

**Q:** *What is West Nile Virus?*

**A:** A new virus first detected in the U.S. in 1999. You can get the virus if you are bitten by an infected mosquito. The mosquito becomes infected by feeding on an infected bird or animal. When the mosquito feeds on you, the virus can be transmitted through the mosquito's saliva.

**Q:** *What is the best treatment?*

**A:** right now there is no specific treatment for West Nile virus, but researchers are testing a Hepatitis C drug—alpha interferon—to see if it helps prevent brain damage in people who develop encephalitis from the disease.

**Q:** *Is there a test to see if I have it?*

**A:** Yes. Your medical provider can take a blood sample and send it to the lab to determine if you've been infected.

**Q:** *Who is at risk?*

**A:** Though anyone can be infected, certain populations are at higher risk of developing severe illness:

- People over age 50
- Anyone with an illness that suppresses the immune system (such as HIV)
- Anyone on medications that suppress the immune system (such as certain drugs for rheumatoid arthritis or organ transplants).

**Q:** *How can I protect myself?*

**A:** The best way is to avoid mosquito bites by wearing long sleeves, staying indoors at dawn, dusk and early evening, and spraying insect repellent. Be careful when using insect repellent!

**West Nile Virus is garnering lots of attention in the media these days.**

**Nurse Practitioner, Shelly Norman, has compiled answers to some frequently-asked questions about West Nile Virus.**

