

Switzerland County School Corporation West Nile Virus

As seen in the news, the cases of the West Nile Virus have been increasing throughout the State. As a School Corporation, we want everyone to be educated about this virus. Currently, we are unaware of any West Nile Virus case(s) in the school corporation or in the county (per Switzerland County Health Department). The following information on this virus is provided by the CDC (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention).

HOW DOES WEST NILE VIRUS SPREAD?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness. Most often, WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite. In a very small number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby. WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

HOW SOON DO INFECTED PEOPLE GET SICK?

People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF WNV?

Serious symptoms in a few people: About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks and neurological effects may be permanent.

Milder symptoms in some people: Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.

No symptoms in most people: Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

HOW IS WNV INFECTION TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In cases with milder symptoms, people experience symptoms such as fever and aches that pass on their own, although even healthy people have become sick for several weeks. In more severe cases, people usually need to go to the hospital where they can receive supportive treatment including intravenous fluids, help with breathing and nursing care.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE WNV?

Milder WNV illness improves on its own and people do not necessarily need to seek medical attention for this infection though they may choose to do so. If you develop symptoms of severe WNV illness, such as unusually severe headaches or confusion, seek medical attention immediately. Severe WNV illness usually requires hospitalization. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are encouraged to talk to their doctor if they develop symptoms that could be WNV.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT WNV?

The easiest and best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites. When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient. Follow the directions on the package. Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours. Make sure you have good screens on your

windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out. Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep Children' s wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further information call 1-800-232-4636 or email at cdcinfo@cdc.gov

I hope you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,
Switzerland County School Corporation