

Mission In Motion
Health & Wellness
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Summer Tip

West Nile Virus Strikes 42 States, Including Texas

Many states across the country are reporting higher-than-normal cases of West Nile virus. Thus far in 2012, 42 states have reported a total of 241 cases West Nile virus infections in people to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is the highest number of cases reported through the end of July since 2004, according to the CDC. The high count is attributed in large part to the much higher than average number of infested mosquitoes, brought on by the mild winter, early spring and very hot summer we've experienced this year.

An incidence map posted on the CDC website shows the highest concentration of human cases in the North Texas region and throughout Mississippi. Almost 80 percent of the cases have been reported from Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma.

In Texas, 111 people are confirmed to have fallen ill with West Nile infection, more than double the 10-year average for cases reported before August. Of that total, 107 were in Dallas, Tarrant, Collin and Denton counties alone. Two deaths in Dallas County have been connected to the illness, according to Texas Department of State Health Services.

Should I be concerned?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): West Nile can affect anyone, but the very young, the elderly and those already ill are at a higher risk for infection. People who work or spend a lot of time outdoors should be aware of mosquito bites and take preventive measures to avoid being bitten. Four out of five people who get West Nile won't get sick, but 1 in 150 people with the virus will develop a severe case.

What are the symptoms?

Most cases that occur are mild. However, you should contact your physician or consider going to the emergency room if you have:

- A fever higher than 103° F
- Confusion
- Chest pressure
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe vomiting
- Diarrhea

What can I do?

- Wear an insect repellent, preferably one with DEET, when outdoors
- Avoid being outdoors between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are biting
- Install or repair screens to keep mosquitoes outside
- Drain standing water to eliminate breeding habitats
- Keep pools, saunas and hot tubs chlorinated
- Wear light-colored clothes when outdoors, and dress in long sleeves and long pants if possible

Where can I get more information?

The CDC has a fact sheet about West Nile on its website at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv_factsheet.htm