What is West Nile Virus?

It's one of a group of viruses spread by mosquito bites.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a flavivirus commonly found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. It is closely related to St. Louis encephalitis virus found in the United States. The virus can infect humans, birds, mosquitoes, horses and some other mammals.

West Nile Virus can cause mild to severe illness. Most people who get infected do not get sick. Some get a mild, flu-like illness. In rarer cases, the virus can affect the brain and spinal cord and cause encephalitis, and can be fatal.

People typically develop symptoms between 3 and 14 days after they are bitten by an infected mosquito.
What are the Symptoms of WNV?

WNV can affect the central nervous system. The severity of symptoms can vary from person-to-person.

- No Symptoms in Most People. Approximately 80% of people who are infected with West Nile Virus will not show any symptoms and will not know they have it.
- Mild Infection in Some People. Up to 20% of the people who become infected will display mild flu-like symptoms, including headache and body aches, nausea, vomiting, as well as swollen lymph glands, or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms typically last a few days. This is known as West Nile fever.
- Serious Infection in a Few People. About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness, such as West Nile Encephalitis, West Nile Meningitis or West Nile Meningoencephalitis. The symptoms can include headache as well as neck stiffness, confusion and high fever. These symptoms may last several weeks or even months. The neurological effects may be permanent.
- WNV is known to cause death in rare circumstances.

How is WNV Treated?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In mild cases, people experience symptoms such as fever and aches that go away on their own. In more severe cases, people may need to go to the hospital where they can receive supportive treatment including intravenous fluids, help with breathing and nursing care.

What Should I do if I think I have WNV?

If you think you may have West Nile Virus, see your doctor or health care provider as soon as possible. They will be able to run the tests needed to diagnose and treat your condition.

Mild WNV illness often improves on its own. If you develop symptoms of the more severe form of WNV illness, such as unusually severe headaches or confusion, seek medical attention immediately.

What is Dallas County Doing?

Dallas County uses an Integrated Mosquito Management program to control the mosquito population. IMM uses various techniques that include the following tools:

- Surveillance: The collection of mosquitoes to determine the location, species, quantity and virus potential.
- Source Reduction: Investigate and remove water sources that support mosquito breeding habitats.
- Larvicide: The use of mosquito fish and EPA-approved products to kill mosquito larva in standing water.
- Adulticide: The spraying of EPA-approved products from trucks to reduce mosquito populations.
- Public Awareness: Informing the public by press releases, public information campaigns, websites, flyers and presentations.
- Personal Protection: Changing personal habits to reduce mosquito bites.

What Can I Do?

Mosquito Proof

Remember the Best Offense is a Good Defense

Drain

- Get rid of ALL standing water.
- Empty, remove, cover or turn upside down any containers that will hold standing water (bottles, cans, tires, buckets, flower pots, etc.)
- Change water in pet dishes, wading pools and bird baths several times a week.
- Cover trash containers so they will not collect water.

Dress

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing to avoid mosquito bites when outside.

Deet

- Use insect repellent products with “DEET” or other EPA approved repellents and follow product instructions.