

West Nile virus detected in USA

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In news- The New York City Health Department has recently announced that the West Nile virus was detected in two people, as well as in a “record number” of infected mosquitoes throughout the city.

What is the West Nile virus?

- The West Nile virus is **spread through a bite from an infected mosquito and can infect humans, birds** and other mammals.
- **According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Birds are the main host of the virus and mosquitoes become infected by biting birds.**
- West Nile Virus is a member of the flavivirus genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- **It was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937.**
- **It was identified in birds (crows and columbiformes) in the Nile delta region in 1953.**
- Members of the crow family (Corvidae) are particularly susceptible, but the virus has been detected in dead and dying birds of more than 250 species.
- It **cannot be spread from person to person** through casual contact.
- In a very small number of cases, West Nile virus has been spread through:
 - Exposure in a laboratory setting
 - Blood transfusion and organ transplant.
 - Mother to baby, during pregnancy, delivery, or

breast feeding.

- **Most people who are infected by West Nile virus do not develop any symptoms or may experience mild to moderate illness.**
- About 1 in 5 develop a fever, along with other **symptoms like headaches, body aches, joint pains**, diarrhea, vomiting or a rash.
- And about 1 in 150 people infected develop **severe illness** affecting the central nervous system. **Symptoms include high fever, headaches, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, vision loss or paralysis.**
- **Those older than 60 are at the highest risk for severe illness.**
- Those with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure, can also be at a higher risk for severe illness.
- Recovery from a severe case of West Nile can take anywhere from several weeks to months, but **central nervous system damage can be permanent.**
- **A blood test can be conducted to determine a West Nile infection.**
- **There are no vaccines or medicines** that specifically treat West Nile virus infections.
- Over-the-counter pain relievers can be used to help with some symptoms and hospitalization may be necessary for more severe cases.