

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

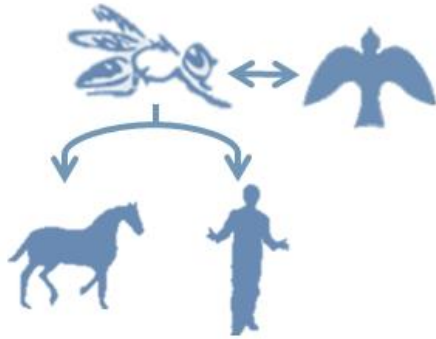
## WESTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS DISEASE

Western equine encephalitis (WEE) virus is a virus that causes inflammation of the brain. Western equine encephalitis virus is found in North, Central and South America, but most cases have been reported from the plains regions of the western and central United States. There are no records of human cases acquired in Ohio.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin within 5 to 10 days after a mosquito bite.

- Most infections do not result in any symptoms.
- Mild cases: fever, headache, and tiredness.
- Severe infections: sudden headache, high fever, neck stiffness, confusion, seizures, unconsciousness, paralysis, or death. The illness is fatal in about 3% of cases.



### Transmission

- WEE spreads by the bites from infected mosquitoes. Even one mosquito bite is enough to pass the disease.
- Mosquitoes usually become infected when they feed on birds carrying the virus. Infected mosquitoes then transmit the virus to other birds, animals, or humans when they bite them. Western Equine Encephalitis viruses also infect horses.
- These diseases cannot be transmitted directly from person to person. Mosquitoes are the only carrier.



### Treatment

- Blood or spinal fluid can be tested for antibodies.
- There is no specific treatment for encephalitis. Care centers on treatment of symptoms and complications.
- Once infected, people are immune. However, a person can still get other mosquito-borne viruses.

### Prevention

- There are no human vaccines. Vaccines for horses are available.
- Protect yourself from mosquito bites:
  - Use mosquito repellents on skin and clothing.
  - Campers should consider using bed nets.
  - Wear light-colored clothing.
  - Stay in screened or indoor areas during the peak mosquito biting times of dawn, dusk and evening.
  - Wear long pants, long sleeves, and/or socks if possible.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites by covering or discarding items that collect water outdoors (for example, rain gutters, buckets, or used tires). Empty containers of standing water weekly.



All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



c/o Franklin County Public Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-4562

Call: (614) 525-8888 • After Hours: (614) 525-3965 • Fax: (614) 525-8890

Email: [idsr@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:idsr@franklincountyohio.gov) • Web: [www.idrsinfo.org](http://www.idrsinfo.org)

