



HEALTH ALERT

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West Nile Virus and Other Mosquito-borne Diseases in Pennsylvania

The Office of Developmental Programs is sharing this Health Alert to make all individuals, providers, staff and other caregivers aware of the latest Health Alert from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) for West Nile virus (WNV) and other mosquito-borne illnesses.

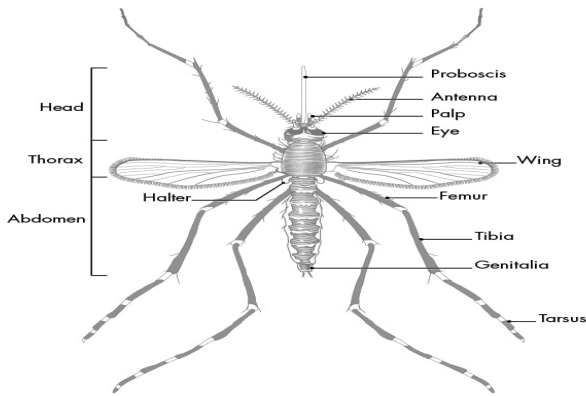
The PA DOH notes that:

- As of Tuesday May 21, 2024, Pennsylvania's first WNV-positive mosquito pools were identified in Adams, Bucks, Philadelphia and York counties in May.
- Health care providers should have a heightened clinical suspicion for West Nile and other arboviral infections in persons with clinically compatible symptoms.
- For questions, please call your local health department or DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) reminds health care providers to consider the diagnosis of arboviral infection in persons presenting with undifferentiated febrile illness or signs of meningoencephalitis, to ask about recent travel history (past 3 weeks) and outdoor exposures, and to collect appropriate diagnostic specimens. All arbovirus infections (e.g., infections due to [West Nile](#), [St. Louis encephalitis](#), [Jamestown Canyon](#), La Crosse, [Dengue](#), [Chikungunya](#), [Zika](#), Powassan, etc.) are reportable to the DOH within 24 hours of diagnosis in Pennsylvania.

What Is a Mosquito?

Mosquitoes are a family of small flies consisting of 3,700 species. Mosquitoes have a slender body, one pair of wings, three pairs of long hair-like legs, and specialized, highly elongated, piercing-sucking mouthparts. Adult females of many species have mouthparts (proboscis) adapted to pierce the skin of a host and feed on blood of a wide range of vertebrate hosts. Over 200 types of mosquitoes live in the continental United States and U.S. territories. About 12 types spread germs that can make people sick.



About mosquito bites

When a mosquito bites you, it pierces the skin using a special mouthpart (proboscis) to suck up blood. As the mosquito is feeding, it injects saliva into your skin. Your body reacts to the saliva resulting in a bump and itching. Some people have only a mild reaction to a bite or bites. Other people react more strongly, and a large area of swelling, soreness, and redness can occur.



What is a mosquito-borne illness?

When a mosquito bites a person to feed, they can sometimes pass diseases that they acquired from another host. This is called a mosquito-borne illness. Mosquito-borne illnesses are caused by bacteria, viruses or other parasites passed to the host while the mosquito is feeding.

Symptoms of mosquito-borne illness

Most mosquito-borne infections do not show symptoms. When symptoms do occur, the clinical disease ranges from mild febrile illness to severe encephalitis, which is inflammation of the brain. The most common symptoms of mosquito-borne illnesses include:

- **Fever/chills.** All mosquito-borne diseases can cause illness that includes a fever.

- **Aches and pains.** Mosquito-borne diseases can cause headache, fatigue, and muscle aches/weakness, joint pain, stiff neck, rash and vomiting.

Mosquito bite prevention

The best way to reduce the risk of illness from mosquitoes is to take steps to avoid mosquito bites. Mosquito bites can happen anywhere, but you may be more likely to be bitten when you are near wooded and brushy areas, forests, marshes, or tall grasses. All mosquitoes like water because mosquitoes lay eggs live in water with little or no flow. The risk of getting mosquito bites can be reduced by:

- Using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved insect repellents on exposed skin and over clothing;
- Using products that contain 0.5% permethrin on shoes, clothing, and gear;
- Wear loose-fitting clothing, long sleeved shirts and pants.
- [MosquitoBitePreventionUS_508.pdf \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [LowLit_FS_LongSleevesPants.pdf \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Infographic_MosquitoBites-P.pdf \(cdc.gov\)](#)

Contact your healthcare professional if:

- If a bite becomes red, warm, or shows a spreading red streak, seek medical attention.
- If you experience symptoms after travel (fever, headache, muscle pain, rash), especially after visiting areas with mosquito-borne diseases, seek medical help and share your travel history.

References

[Mosquitoes | CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)