

# What you should know about West Nile Virus in Michigan

## What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?

West Nile is one of many viruses that can infect the brain and spinal cord, leading to swelling and inflammation of these tissues. It can cause serious illness in humans, horses, birds and other animals.

In most people, the virus is controlled by the immune system and produces no symptoms or only flu-like symptoms. In a small number of people, the virus multiplies in the central nervous system, causing high fever, tremors or paralysis, coma and even death.

Currently, there is no WNV vaccine for humans nor any specific treatment for the disease.

## How is WNV transmitted?

West Nile is primarily transmitted by mosquitoes. The virus cycle is maintained in certain kinds of mosquitoes and birds such as crows and blue jays. A typical cycle starts with a mosquito biting an infected bird. This mosquito becomes infected and can then infect more birds and allow the disease to magnify as more mosquitoes pick up the virus from birds. In some instances, an infected mosquito will bite a person or animal and transmit the virus to these hosts.

WNV can also be spread to humans through blood transfusions or organ transplants, but blood supplies in Michigan are screened for the virus.



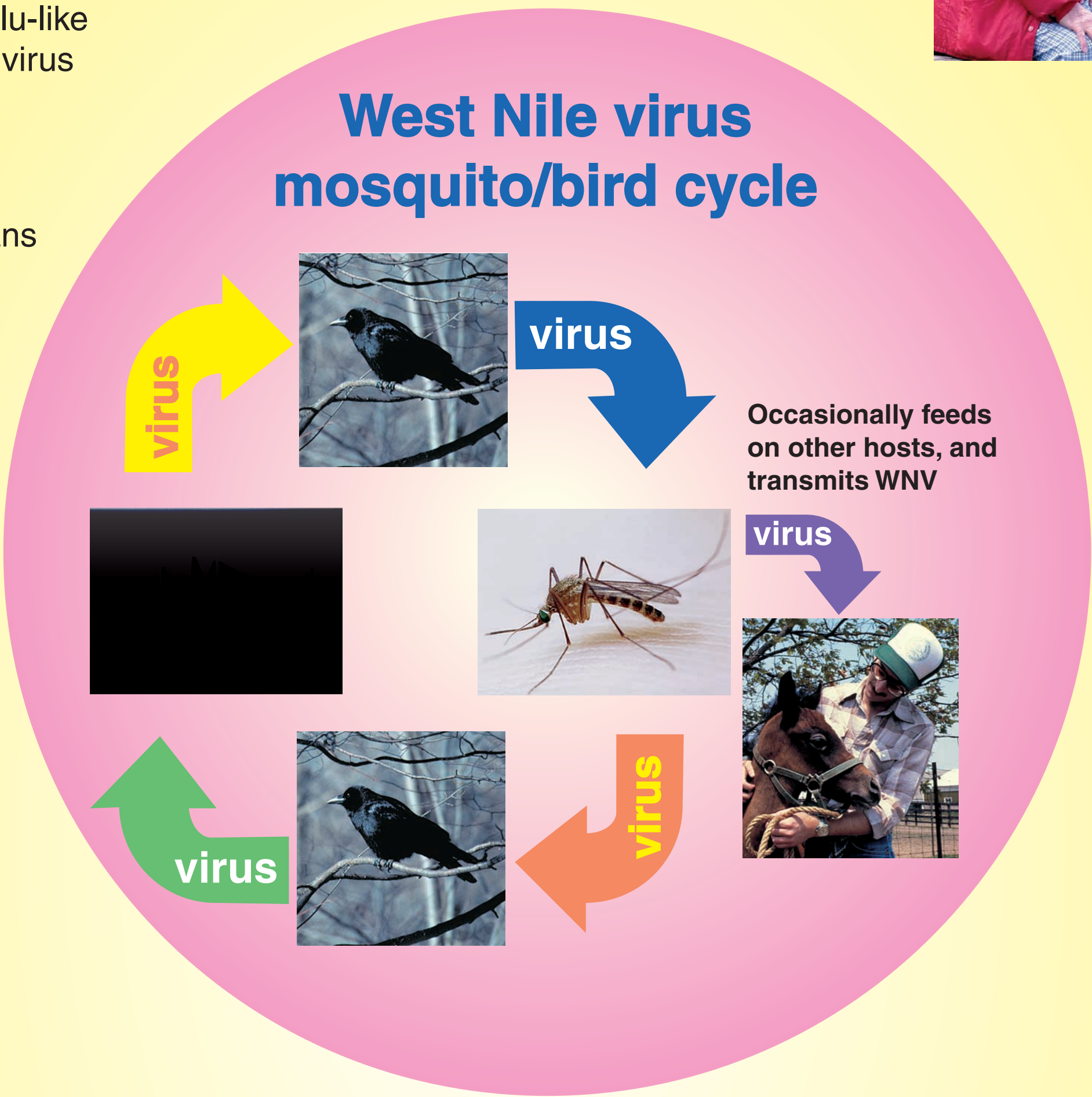
## Who is at risk?



Anyone can acquire the disease, but the risk is higher for people over the age of 50 and for those with some other illness or a compromised immune system.



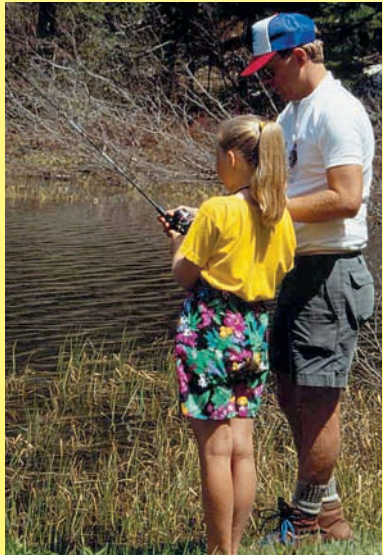
Among animals, horses and some birds are susceptible; most others are not.



## What can you do?

### Protect yourself from mosquitoes.

- Use effective repellents.
- Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are active.
- Repair screens/windows.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeve shirts or tops.



### Eliminate mosquito breeding sites.

- Remove standing water and containers, or change water weekly.
- Drain or fill low spots when possible.



### Treat breeding sites.

- If site can't be drained, treat with approved substances that kill larvae or keep them from developing into adults.



Storm sewer catch basin.



Sewage lagoon.



Farm ponds.

### Be alert.

- Report dead or sick birds, particularly crows and blue jays, to your local health department or use the Michigan WNV Web site. Be aware of programs monitoring virus activity in your area and local mosquito control efforts. Visit the Michigan WNV Web site for up-to-date information and more details about what you can do individually and collectively to prevent this disease.



[www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases)  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm)  
[www.mimosq.org](http://www.mimosq.org)

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