



Public Health Administration

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October 8, 2026

Clinical Health Advisory Enhancing Preparedness for a Potential Increase in West Nile Virus (WNV) Cases During the 2026 Vector-Borne Season (Not Intended for Public Dissemination)

Key Messages

- **Local West Nile virus (WNV) activity is elevated.** San Bernardino County Department of Public Health (SBCDPH) has confirmed **six cases** of human neuroinvasive West Nile virus (WNV) infection in August and September 2026. These are the first cases reported to SBCDPH since August 2024.
- **Consider WNV infection** in patients presenting with an unexplained febrile illness, encephalitis, meningitis, and/or flaccid paralysis during mosquito season (March to October). Clinicians must report WNV infections to SBCDPH Communicable Disease Section within one working day of identification as required by the Title 17, California Code of Regulations (CCR) by calling (800) 722-4794 on weekdays 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and after hours before 8 a.m. and after 5 p.m., and weekends at (800) 472-2376.
- **Immunocompromised and older patients are at higher risk of neuroinvasive disease**, such as those with chronic health conditions, solid organ transplants, hematologic malignancies, and those on anti-CD20 medications (e.g., rituximab, ocrelizumab). See below for testing considerations for this population.
- **Counsel patients on prevention.** Currently there are no licensed vaccines or specific medications available to prevent or treat WNV disease in humans. Care is supportive. Therefore, the community is encouraged to protect themselves from mosquito bites through [defend, dawn and dusk, and drain practices](#).

Background

- WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected *Culex* species mosquito. In rare cases, WNV may be transmitted through blood transfusions, organ transplants, laboratory exposure, and from mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.
- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has recently [announced](#) that they are seeing the highest levels of positive WNV dead birds and mosquitoes in five years

statewide. Please refer to SBCDPH's County Update on [Staying informed and taking preventative steps to reduce the risk of West Nile Virus](#).

- Several positive WNV mosquito pools and dead birds have been detected throughout San Bernardino County since early May 2026.
- SBCDPH Environmental Health Services program is diligently conducting surveillance and larval control operations in areas with confirmed WNV-positive mosquito pools in San Bernardino County. ([CDPH: WNV Activity at Five-Year High](#))

Signs and Symptoms of West Nile Virus Disease

- Symptoms typically appear 2 to 6 days after being bitten and are self-limiting, although fatigue and weakness can last weeks to months after infection.
- 4 out of 5 people who are infected with WNV are asymptomatic, while a small number will develop nonspecific symptoms such as fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and skin rash.
- About 1 out of 150 individuals will develop neuroinvasive disease, which typically manifests as encephalitis or meningitis. Severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, vision loss, numbness, confusion, muscle weakness, paralysis, and coma.
- Immunocompromised individuals and persons older than 65 years are at increased risk for severe disease and death.
- For resources on signs and symptoms of West Nile Virus Disease, please refer to [CDC Clinical Signs and Symptoms of West Nile Virus Disease](#)

General Testing, Reporting, and Treatment Guidance

- [CDC Clinical Testing and Diagnosis for WNV Disease](#)
 - For details on WNV diagnostic testing, please refer to [CDC West Nile Virus Diagnostic Algorithm](#)
 - Serum testing for IgM is the preferred test while reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) should be added in severely immunocompromised individuals.
 - Consider lumbar puncture and send for IgM/PCR for patients presenting with neurologic symptoms.
- [CDC Clinical Treatment and Prevention of WNV Disease](#)

Patients With Concerns about Mosquito Control

- Patients who have concerns about mosquito control can contact SBCDPH Environmental Health Services (EHS) at 800-442-2283 or visit the [Mosquito and Vector Control](#) website for vector control efforts and community education.
- For additional details on how to prevent WNV disease and mosquito control in the community and at home, please refer patients to:
 - [CDPH West Nile Virus-What You Need to Know](#)
 - [CDC Preventing West Nile Virus](#)
 - [Mosquito Control in the Community and At Home](#)

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If you have any questions on reporting a communicable disease, the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health Communicable Disease Section can be reached on:

- Weekdays 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at 800-722-4794
- After hours before 8 a.m. and after 5 p.m., and weekends at 800-472-2376

Dead or sick birds can be reported to 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473) or at westnile.ca.gov/report.