



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus spread through mosquito bites, and the leading cause of mosquito-borne virus in the United States. Asking the right questions during your conversation with a doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF)	A fluid that contains nutrients and is circulated in the brain and spinal cord.
Meningitis	An inflammation of the layers that surround the brain and spinal cord (the meninges), which can lead to increased pressure and damage to the brain and spinal cord.
Encephalitis	Swelling of the brain.
WNV Specific Immunoglobulin M (IgM)	The antibody that doctors look for as the first step in diagnosing WNV.
Plaque-reduction neutralization tests (PRNTs)	Tests performed in specialized laboratories such as those in state public health agencies or at the CDC. These tests can show the specific virus causing the infection.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage West Nile Virus.

About Symptoms

- What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus?
- What is the difference between symptoms of encephalitis and symptoms of meningitis?
- How severe will symptoms get?
- How long will symptoms persist?
- What are the long term symptoms?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Can I get West Nile Virus again after the first time?
- Is there a vaccine that my family can take?
- Can I spread the virus to other people like my family?
- Should I be worried about our pets having it and infecting family members?

About Diagnosis

- How is West Nile Virus diagnosed?
- How does a spinal tap work?
- If the antibodies aren't in my cerebrospinal fluid, does that mean I don't have the virus?
- Do I have to take more than one blood test?
- How can we be absolutely sure of the diagnosis?

About Treatment

- What is the treatment for West Nile Virus?
- Is there a difference between treating meningitis, encephalitis, or the virus itself?
- What treatment is done in the hospital?
- What treatment is done at home?

About Living With West Nile Virus

- Am I going to miss work?
