



Fact Sheet: Arboviral Encephalitis

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is encephalitis?

It is a swelling of the brain. It has many different causes including viruses, bacteria, parasites, and toxins.

Arboviral encephalitis is caused by a virus that can be transmitted by mosquitoes, sandflies or ticks. It is most common in the summer and early fall.

Only a few types of mosquitoes carry the virus and are able to spread disease to humans.

The virus is not spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of encephalitis?

Symptoms of arboviral infections can range from very mild to very severe. Most people infected experience fever, headache, malaise, muscle or joint pain. Occasionally, people may experience nausea, vomiting, conjunctivitis, photophobia and/or a skin rash. Symptoms usually resolve within a week.

Who is at risk for encephalitis?

Anyone can get arboviral encephalitis. The elderly with underlying medical conditions appear to be more at risk. Young children may experience more severe illness.

How is encephalitis treated?

There is no specific treatment available for arboviral encephalitis. Infection usually results in lifelong immunity.

How can encephalitis be prevented?

The best way to prevent encephalitis is to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.

- Spray legs, arms, and clothing with repellent as mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing.
 - Limit outdoor activities at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening when mosquitoes are most active.
 - Inspect window and door screens and repair any holes found.
 - Remove any standing water around homes. As little as a half inch of water can support dozens of mosquitoes
- Use insect repellent containing DEET if spending time outdoors in mosquito or tick infested areas.

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