

# West Nile cases pass 4,500 mark nationwide: CDC

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Number of deaths now stands at 183, up from 168 last week.

(HealthDay)—The number of West Nile virus cases this year has surpassed 4,500, U.S. health officials reported Wednesday, and the number of deaths has reached 183, up from 168 last week.

As of Tuesday, 48 states had reported West Nile infections in people, birds or mosquitoes. A total of 4,531 cases involved people. Of these cases, 51 percent were classified as neuroinvasive disease (such as meningitis or encephalitis) and 49 percent were classified as non-neuroinvasive disease.

The 4,531 cases are the highest number reported through the third week of October since 2003. Almost 70 percent of the reported cases are from eight states—Texas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Illinois, South Dakota, Michigan and Oklahoma—and more than one-third have been reported in Texas, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and](#)

## Prevention.

The best way to avoid the virus is to wear [insect repellent](#) and support local programs to eradicate mosquitoes. There is no treatment for [West Nile virus](#) and no vaccine to prevent it, according to the CDC.

Typically, 80 percent of people infected with the virus develop no or few symptoms, while 20 percent develop mild symptoms such as headache, joint pain, fever, skin rash and swollen lymph glands, according to the CDC.

Although most people with mild cases of West Nile virus will recover on their own, the CDC recommends that anyone who develops symptoms see their doctor right away.

People older than 50 and those with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, [kidney disease](#) and [organ transplants](#), are at greater risk for serious illness.

The best way to protect yourself from West Nile virus is to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes, which can pick up the disease from infected birds.

The CDC recommends the following steps to protect yourself:

- Use insect repellents when outside.
- Wear long sleeves and pants from dawn to dusk.
- Don't leave standing water outside in open containers, such as flowerpots, buckets and kiddie pools.
- Install or repair windows and door screens.
- Use air conditioning when possible.

**More information:** For more on West Nile virus, visit the [U.S.](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)

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