

Saint Louis Encephalitis

1. What is St. Louis Encephalitis Virus (SLEV)?

St. Louis Encephalitis virus (SLEV) is a virus that's spread through infected mosquito bites. It can make you sick. It's spread by the same mosquitoes that can spread West Nile virus (WNV). SLEV causes similar symptoms, but it's rare in Los Angeles County. Everyone is at risk of infection with SLEV, but people at highest risk of serious illness are adults over 50 years old.

2. How does SLEV spread?

SLEV is spread when someone gets bitten by an infected mosquito. Most mosquitoes aren't infected with SLEV, but mosquitoes can also carry other diseases. You should avoid all mosquito bites to protect yourself. SLEV doesn't spread through casual contact, like touching or kissing a person with the virus.

3. What are the symptoms of SLEV?

Most people infected with SLEV have no symptoms or experience a flu-like illness. Some patients, especially older adults, can develop severe symptoms including fever, headache, stiff neck, confusion, and decreased alertness. The disease can also cause coma, paralysis, and death. If you or a family member have concerning symptoms, talk with a healthcare provider for help..

4. How is SLEV treated?

There are no medicines or vaccines (shots) to treat or prevent SLEV disease. Antibiotics don't work for viruses like SLEV. People with severe symptoms may need to be hospitalized and receive treatment for their symptoms.

5. What can you do to prevent getting sick with SLEV?

- Avoid getting mosquito bites.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellants when spending time outside. Consider wearing long sleeves, pants, and other protective clothing.
- Keep mosquitoes out of your home. Make sure your door and window screens are in good condition.
- Get rid of standing water where mosquitos can lay their eggs. Check your yard for containers that hold water once a week. Cover, clean, and clear out water from items such as rain barrels, potted plants, pet water bowls and bird baths.



Key Points

- SLEV can make you sick. It's spread by bites from infected mosquitoes
- Casual contact doesn't spread the disease.
- SLEV is rare in Los Angeles County, but you should avoid mosquito bites to protect yourself.

For more information:

Los Angeles County
Department of Public
Health

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/diseases/SLE.htm>

California Department of
Public Health

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/SLE.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/sle/>

CDCP-ACDC-134-01 (10/01/2018)