

**What is being done to reduce the risk of transfusion-related WNV transmission?**

In 2003, all blood banks began using a blood screening test for WNV. In addition, blood banks will not take donations from people who have symptoms that suggest WNV (fever, headache, etc.) in the week before they donate blood.

Is there a chance I could get WNV from donating blood?

No. There is no risk of WNV infection during the process of blood donation.

Should people avoid getting blood transfusions or organ transplants?

Roughly 4.5 million people receive blood or blood products annually. The benefits of receiving needed transfusions or transplants outweigh the potential risk for WNV infection. However, doctors and their patients who need blood transfusions or organ transplants should be aware of the risk for WNV infection.

How can blood banks avoid collecting blood from donors who may have WNV?

Because most people who have WNV infections do not have symptoms, it may be difficult to identify them. To avoid this problem, blood banks and their industry partners have developed tests to screen the blood for WNV.

The CDC, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), blood collection agencies and state and local health departments will continue to investigate WNV infections in people who receive blood transfusions and transplanted organs to make sure these new screening methods are working. For more information about current efforts by the FDA, see:

www.fda.gov/cber/gdlns/wnvguid.htm.

If a person had a WNV infection in the past, can they still donate blood?

Yes. WNV infections do not last very long. Potential blood donors with a medical diagnosis of WNV illness (i.e., including symptoms and positive laboratory results) should not be allowed to donate for at least 28 days from the start of their symptoms OR until 14 days after they recover, whichever date is later. If there are no symptoms to suggest a WNV illness, a positive WNV antibody test result alone should not be grounds for refusing a blood donation.

If I recently had a transfusion or transplant, should I be concerned about getting WNV?

You should be aware of the potential risk for WNV infection and the need to monitor your health. If you have symptoms of WNV or other concerns you should contact your doctor. If a patient who recently received a blood transfusion or organ transplantation develops a WNV infection, that does not necessarily mean that the transfusion/transplantation was the source of infection.

What happens to the blood collected from donors that test positive for WNV?

As soon as a unit of blood is identified as possibly infected with WNV by initial screening, it is removed from the blood supply. If the confirmation process reveals that the unit is NOT actually infected, the remaining blood

products may be used.

If my blood tests positive for WNV at a blood bank, does this mean I'm going to get sick?

A positive test for WNV means that you have WNV in your blood. Most likely, you have recently been bitten by an infected mosquito. Most infected people do not become ill at all, and only a very small number develop West Nile fever or more serious disease .

Will the blood bank notify me if my blood tests positive for WNV?

Blood banks will contact donors who may have a WNV infection. A subsequent blood sample may be requested in order to help confirm the infection.

What do I need to do if my blood tests positive for WNV?

If you learn from a blood bank that your blood was likely infected with WNV, you may be requested to give another blood sample to help confirm the infection.

Most WNV infections do not cause any symptoms and do not require any medical attention. There is nothing in particular that you need to do because of the infection. It is also likely that you have antibodies to prevent you from getting sick with WNV in the future. However, if you begin to feel ill, you should consult your health-care provider.

State and local health departments will report cases of WNV infection in patients who have received blood transfusions to the blood collection agency and to the CDC. In addition, cases of WNV infection in people who donated blood prior to becoming ill will also be reported to the CDC and the blood collection agency.

Are all U.S. blood banks testing the blood they collect for WNV?

Yes. Most blood banks in the U.S. have been screening blood since July 1, 2003.

Additional Information:

Is available at www.ndhealth.gov/wnv or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Source: Thanks to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.