

West Nile Fever (WNF)

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Health

Why in News?

The Health authorities have sounded a caution following suspected cases of West Nile fever (WNF) in Ernakulam.

- **West Nile Fever** - It is a *mosquito-borne viral infection* caused by *West Nile Virus*.
- **Global Spread** - It is found in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Asia, first identified in Uganda (1937).
- **Transmission** - West Nile virus, a flavivirus primarily transmitted by *Culex mosquitoes*.
- **Host** - The birds are the natural hosts, whereas humans and horses are “dead-end” hosts.
- **Symptoms**
 - **Asymptomatic** - Approximately 80% of infected individuals show no symptoms.
 - **Mild Infection** - Approximately 20% experience fever, severe headache, body aches, joint pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, or rash.
 - **Severe Infection** (Neuroinvasive Disease) - Less than 1% develop severe complications, including meningitis, encephalitis, or acute flaccid paralysis.
- **Risk Groups** - People over 50 and immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk of severe illness.
- **Duration** - Mild symptoms typically last a few days; however, recovery from fatigue and weakness can last several weeks or months.
- **Diagnosis** - Key tests include IgM antibody ELISA, PCR for viral RNA, virus isolation in labs & via samples like blood or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).
- **Treatment** - There is *no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine available for humans*, whereas a vaccine is available for horses.
- **Supportive care** - Hospitalisation, IV fluids, respiratory support, pain relief, prevention of secondary infections.
- **Prevention**
 - Use mosquito repellent containing DEET or picaridin.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, particularly at dawn and dusk.
 - Eliminate standing water around homes to reduce mosquito breeding sites

References

1. [The Hindu | Suspected West Nile fever cases trigger health warning](#)
2. [WHO | West Nile Virus](#)



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