

# Viral Encephalitis Treatment

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain. It can be caused by a virus. Mosquitoes are a known transmitter of certain viruses. In the United States, mosquitoes can transmit viruses associated with *eastern* and *western equine encephalitis*, *St. Louis encephalitis*, *La Crosse encephalitis*, and *West Nile encephalitis*. Signs and symptoms of these conditions may be mild, including headache or irritability. However, severe cases may result in by a stiff neck, seizures, or confusion. The geographic location and season of the year also may affect the level of risk. Certain herpes viruses can also lead to encephalitis, including *herpes simplex virus*, *varicella-zoster virus*, and *Epstein-Barr virus*.

The risk of encephalitis from mosquitoes can be reduced by wearing protective clothing while outdoors when mosquito activity is increased, as well as the use of mosquito repellent containing DEET. Acetaminophen (*Tylenol*) may help alleviate headache and fever. Anti-inflammatory medications can also decrease symptoms. When the condition is caused by herpes simplex virus or varicella-zoster virus, an antiviral medication such as acyclovir (*Zovirax*) or ganciclovir (*Cytovene*) may be prescribed. However, antiviral medications are likely not useful for treating encephalitis caused by other types of viruses.