

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## LACROSSE ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS DISEASE

LaCrosse virus, also known as California encephalitis, is a rare disease that is caused by a virus spread by infected mosquitoes. In the United States, about 80-100 LaCrosse virus disease cases are reported each year. Ohio averages 20 cases each year, more than in any other state. Seven fatalities, all children, have been documented in Ohio.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin within 5 to 15 days after a mosquito bite.

- 99% of infections have no symptoms.
- Symptoms usually start with include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and tiredness.
- Severe disease may include seizures, paralysis, or coma.
- Serious illness and death is more likely in children under age 16.



### Transmission

- LaCrosse encephalitis spreads by the bites from infected mosquitoes. Even one mosquito bite is enough to pass the disease. Mosquitoes can pass the virus on to their offspring, or contract the virus from infected squirrels or chipmunks.
- The disease cannot be transmitted directly from person to person.

### Treatment

- Blood or spinal fluid can be tested for antibodies.
- There is no specific treatment. Care centers on treatment of symptoms and complications. Severe cases may need to be hospitalized.
- Once infected, people are immune. However, a person can still get other mosquito-borne viruses.

### Prevention

- Protect yourself from mosquito bites:
  - Use mosquito repellents on skin and clothing.
  - Campers should consider using bed nets.
  - Wear light-colored clothing.
  - Stay in screened or indoor areas during the peak mosquito biting times of dawn, dusk and evening.
  - Wear long pants, long sleeves, and/or socks if possible.
- The mosquito that carries LaCrosse likes to breed in empty containers, such as flower pots, trash, buckets, or used tires). Empty containers of standing water weekly or throw them away.



All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



c/o Franklin County Public Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-4562

Call: (614) 525-8888 • After Hours: (614) 525-3965 • Fax: (614) 525-8890

Email: [idsr@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:idsr@franklincountyohio.gov) • Web: [www.idrsinfo.org](http://www.idrsinfo.org)



COLUMBUS  
PUBLIC HEALTH