

## St. Louis Encephalitis Information Sheet

### What is St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE)?

St. Louis Encephalitis is a type of virus, similar to West Nile Virus. SLE mostly infects birds but can also infect humans. SLE is not common in Arizona, but in 2015, there was an outbreak of SLE in Maricopa County.

### How can you catch SLE?

SLE is spread by mosquitoes that bite infected birds. The mosquitoes then bite people who may or may not show symptoms. Most people who get infected with SLE virus will not have any symptoms, or will have mild flu-like symptoms. About 1 of every 150 people infected with SLE will develop severe illness, including paralysis. People over age 50 are most at risk for severe illness.

### What are the symptoms of SLE?

Usually, symptoms start 5 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms can include:

#### Milder symptoms (more common)

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches

#### Severe symptoms (less common)

- Severe headache
- High fever
- Stiff neck
- Muscle weakness
- Confusion
- Tremors, paralysis or coma

### How can you be treated for SLE?

There is no specific medicine to treat SLE. Severe illness may require hospitalization.

### How can you prevent SLE?

- When possible, stay inside between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Use insect repellent on exposed skin and clothes. Always follow label instructions.
- Fix broken screens in windows and doors.
- Eliminate places where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Empty standing water from places like buckets, flower pots, old tires, wheelbarrows, etc. Empty and refresh water in pet dishes every 2 days.