

Dengue

Description:

- *Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito and found in most tropical areas of the world including north Queensland, Australia*
- *Initial notifications of dengue occur in travellers returning from overseas with dengue fever*
- *During an outbreak, most notifications of dengue occur by people picking up dengue through local transmission*
- *There are four types of dengue viruses that cause dengue fever worldwide - Dengue 1, 2, 3 and 4. A person infected with one type of dengue will only be immune to that type. They will not be immune to other types of dengue and will, in fact, be at risk of developing severe symptoms if they contract another type of dengue.*

Symptoms:

- Infection with the dengue virus may be subclinical (no apparent symptoms) or may cause illness ranging from a mild fever to a severe, even fatal condition, ie. dengue haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome
- The symptoms may last up to a week. Some people may experience a resurgence of fever and other symptoms that may last another 2-3 days
- Symptoms are most commonly seen in adults and older children. Young children may show minimal or no symptoms.

Typical symptoms may include:

- sudden onset of fever
- intense headache (especially behind the eyes)
- muscle and joint pain (ankles, knees and elbows)
- unpleasant metallic taste in mouth, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain
- flushed skin on face and neck, fine skin rash as fever subsides
- rash on arms and legs, severe itching, peeling of skin and hair loss
- minor bleeding (nose or gums) and heavy menstrual periods
- extreme fatigue

Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF) symptoms

DHF is a rare complication of dengue. It can affect both adults and children. Symptoms include:

- same signs as dengue fever
- 2-5 days after onset of fever, rapid deterioration and cardiovascular disease
- it can lead to shock and sometimes death.

Recommendation : See a doctor immediately if you or anyone in your family have any symptoms of dengue

Transmission:

- In Queensland the dengue virus is spread by a highly domesticated species of mosquito, the Aedes aegypti
- This mosquito becomes infected with dengue when it bites a human who is viraemic with the dengue virus ie. there are enough dengue virus particles in the person's blood to infect a mosquito
- The time from being bitten by an infected mosquito to becoming unwell ranges from three to 12 days
- The day before developing symptoms and up until 12 days after is the period when a dengue mosquito can bite you and pick up the dengue virus
- 10 days later, the mosquito can then bite someone else and infect them with the dengue virus.

Treatment:

- see a doctor immediately if you suspect you have dengue fever
- rest at home and wear insect repellent so you don't spread the disease
- make sure you get enough to drink, even if you cannot eat

Dengue

- have someone stay home to look after you
- use paracetamol (alone or with codeine) for headaches and pains
- don't take more than the recommended dose
- do not take aspirin, ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory drugs because they increase the chance of bleeding.

IF YOUR SYMPTOMS GET WORSE

- Ring or visit your local doctor if you have:
 - unexpected bleeding or bruising
 - severe abdominal pain or vomiting
 - unable to drink
 - confusion, with restlessness or drowsiness
 - collapse or signs of shock: pale, cold, clammy and blotchy skin; weak pulse
- Some people with dengue need hospital treatment for complications
- All patients with dengue haemorrhagic fever need to be hospitalised for fluid replacement and monitoring. Dengue shock syndrome is a medical emergency requiring urgent fluid replacement and close observation.

Prevention and Control

- **GET RID OF BREEDING SITES:** Dengue mozzies are different to bush or swamp mozzies - they breed in containers and junk in your yard. The best form of control is to remove all dengue mosquito breeding sites around the home.
- Dengue mosquitoes breed in containers that hold water. These include buckets, tarpaulins, tyres, pot plant bases, vases, boats and coconut shells. Roof guttering, rainwater tanks and palm fronds are also potential breeding sites. To get rid of dengue breeding sites :
 - check in and around your home and throw out old containers that are not needed
 - store containers in a dry place
 - tip out containers that are holding water
 - clean out roof gutters
- Dengue mosquitoes hide in and around the house and bite during the day. Kill dengue mosquitoes with surface insecticide - spray monthly in dark hiding places, behind and under furniture, in and under the house
- Use personal insect repellent containing DEET or picaridin & reapply according to the label
- Use mosquito coils and plug-in mozzie zappers inside
- Wear protective, light coloured clothing
- Screen living and sleeping areas
- If one person has dengue fever, infected mosquitoes in or near your home could make other people sick. If someone in your home has dengue fever, it is even more important that you do the things listed above i.e. remove all breeding sites, use surface insecticide sprays and plug-in mozzie zappers, and get everyone to apply personal insect repellent regularly.

Help and Assistance

- For general enquires regarding dengue fever or if you suspect you may have dengue fever, contact the Tropical Population Health Services on (07) 4050 3600 (Cairns) or (07) 4753 9000 (Townsville)
- You can also go to the [Queensland Health Dengue website](#)
- For queries regarding mosquito control/complaints contact your nearest council.

Frequently Asked Questions

Go to the [FAQ section](#) of the Queensland Health Dengue website.

Other Resources

[Dengue Fever](#) - Queensland Health website including current outbreak information

Related Content

[Barmah Forest Virus fact sheet](#)

[Ross River Virus fact sheet](#)

Dengue

Footnotes

Heymann, D., ed. 2004. *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*, 18th edition. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.