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Dengue Fever - What You Should Know

Rosanna Springer November 26, 2020 Health and Wellness

Dengue fever is a mosquito borne viral disease which is spread to persons through the bite of an infected Aedes Aegypti mosquito. Mosquitoes become carriers of the dengue virus, when they bite a person who is infected with the DENV virus. These infected mosquitoes can then spread the DENV virus to other persons who are then bitten.

Dengue is caused by one of four related viruses: DENV 1, DENV 2, DENV 3 and DENV 4. For this reason, a person can be infected with four different strains of the dengue virus as many as four times in his or her lifetime.

Symptoms typically begin three to fourteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito, which can range from mild to severe and can affect persons of all ages.

These may include:

- A high fever
- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- A characteristic skin rash
- Swollen lymph glands
- Aches and pains (eye pain typically behind the eyes, in muscles, joints, or bones)

Recovery generally takes up to seven days and in some cases, symptoms can worsen. This type of dengue fever is called severe dengue fever, dengue hemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome.

Severe Dengue Fever occurs when the number of clot-forming cells (platelets) in your bloodstream drops. This can lead to sever internal bleeding, organ failure or you can also experience a sudden drop in blood pressure that can lead to shock. These complications can become life-threatening and often requires hospitalization.



Signs and symptoms of Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever:

- Severe stomach pain
- Persistent vomiting
- Bleeding from your gums or nose
- Blood in your urine, stools or vomitus
- Bleeding under the skin, which might look like bruising
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Fatigue

- Irritability or restlessness

What to do if you get dengue fever?

- Go to your health care provider as soon as possible for diagnosis and to get a blood test to confirm the specific DENV virus infected with
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get adequate rest
- Use Paracetamol, Panadol, or Tylenol to help manage pain and fever
- Avoid the use of aspirin or NSAIDs as these pain relievers can increase dengue hemorrhagic complications
- If symptoms persist or become worst, seek further medical attention as hospitalization may be required

The Aedes Aegypti Mosquito

Useful Information on the Aedes Aegypti Mosquito:

- Dengue virus is mainly transmitted by the female mosquitoes of the species Aedes aegypti
- These mosquitoes are also vectors for chikungunya, yellow fever and zika viruses
- These are daytime biting mosquitoes with peak time at dawn and dusk
- Fly only short distances from around a breeding site
- Females can lay 100 - 200 eggs per batch
- Eggs can remain viable for several months out of water
- Females feed multiple times between egg laying periods
- Has a life cycle of 8 - 10 days in four stages
- Eggs are hatched into larvae when submerged in water
- Larvae develop into pupae in 5 days, pupae develop into flying mosquitoes in 2 3 days
- Needs blood meal to lay eggs



How to protect yourself from being bitten:

- Screen windows and doors
- Wear long fitting clothing
- Sleep under a mosquito net
- Use insect repellent (be mindful of the strength and efficacy)
- Use plug in mosquito traps around home
- Check your property at least once a week for mosquito breeding sites



How to prevent mosquito breeding sites in and around your home:

- Make sure all tanks and containers are covered and sealed to keep out mosquitoes
- Empty water from flowerpots, drip trays and planters
- Change water in flower vases at least once a week
- Turn over containers/receptacles that can not be thrown away from catching rainwater
- Clean all drains and gutters
- Change water in pet bowls frequently
- Keep grass cut short
- Keep swimming pools adequately treated frequently
- Safely dispose of unused containers or objects that can be breeding sites (tires, coconut shells, plastic bags, containers, cans)
- Inspect water storage containers/barrels at least once a week
- Use insecticide water treatments for large water bodies, wells or storage containers
- Introduce larvae eating fish to large bodies of water
- Cover and seal wells and septic tanks
- Ensure all water tanks and manholes are properly sealed
- Check traps and barbeque grill covers for trapped water
- Cover toilets not frequently used
- Check drip trays on fridges and freezers weekly, scrub away any eggs and empty water
- Check plants around home that collect water

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