

Dengue



March 2001

CAUSE

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral disease found in most tropical areas.

There are two principal forms:

- classical dengue - an acute, febrile illness with severe headaches, joint and muscle pain, rash; and
- dengue haemorrhagic fever

SYMPTOMS

How will it affect you? A person infected with dengue may have no symptoms, a mild nonspecific, febrile illness, "classical" dengue fever or dengue haemorrhagic fever.

"Classical" Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is more commonly seen in older children and adults. The onset is usually sudden, with a high fever accompanied by headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains. Other symptoms of dengue fever include weakness, depression, loss of appetite, unpleasant metallic taste in the mouth, sore throat, cough, vomiting and abdominal pain. Infected people may also have minor bleeding problems that include bleeding gums, nosebleed and heavy menstrual periods.

The skin over the face and neck is often flushed early during the course of the illness, followed by the development of a fine rash as the fever subsides. The rash begins on the arms and legs and does not affect

the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. The rash may be associated with severe itching and peeling of the skin.

Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever

Dengue haemorrhagic fever is most commonly seen in children under fifteen years of age but can also occur in adults. Dengue haemorrhagic fever begins with the same symptoms and signs as classical dengue fever, followed two to five days later by a rapid deterioration and cardiovascular collapse, perhaps also with shock (known as dengue shock syndrome), and sometimes death.

Is it serious? Dengue haemorrhagic fever has a fatality rate without treatment. Classical dengue fever can be incapacitating, however death is extremely rare.

How long will it last? The fever and acute symptoms associated with classical dengue fever last up to a week before subsiding. Many patients have no further problems, however, some patients may experience a resurgence of fever and other symptoms which may last two or three more days. Depression and weakness tends to resolve slowly during convalescence.

The duration of illness associated with dengue haemorrhagic fever depends on the severity of illness and response to treatment.

OCCURRENCE

How common is it? There are occasional outbreaks of dengue in North Queensland. Reported cases in Queensland range from almost 700 in 1993 to 62 in 1999.

How likely are you to be affected?

Most Queenslanders are unlikely to be infected with the dengue virus. Aside from occasional outbreaks in North Queensland, it occurs in many overseas countries including parts of Asia, Africa and South America.

NATURAL HISTORY

How is it spread? Dengue is spread by the bite of a particular species of mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*).

How long does it take to get sick from when you catch the infection? The time from being bitten by an infected mosquito to developing the disease ranges from 3 to 14 days, but is commonly 4 to 7 days.

How long is it infectious? Dengue is not spread from person to person. Patients are infective for mosquitoes for a period of 3 - 5 days (up to 12 days).

TREATMENT

What treatment is available?

Classical Dengue Fever

The treatment of classical dengue fever includes plenty of oral fluids and paracetamol for relief of fever, and body aches and pains. Aspirin should not be used because it can affect blood clotting. Infected people should seek medical advice if their condition deteriorates.

Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever

All patients with dengue haemorrhagic fever need to be

hospitalised for fluid therapy and monitoring. Dengue shock syndrome is a medical emergency requiring urgent fluid replacement and close observation.

PREVENTION

What can be done to prevent the disease? Personal protective measures are aimed at preventing mosquito bites during the day, particularly early morning and late afternoon.

- use personal insect repellents
- use insecticide mats to kill mosquitoes
- screen living and sleeping areas
- wear long, loose clothing when outdoors
- spray indoors in dark places (eg. behind cupboards, under beds) with knockdown spray

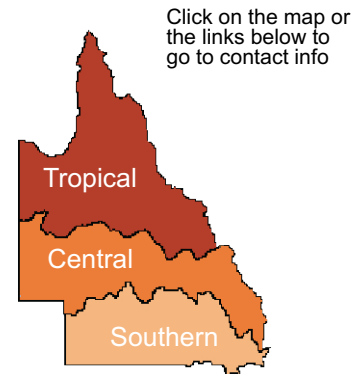
How can the spread of disease be controlled? The best form of control is to get rid of dengue mosquito breeding sites around the home. Dengue mosquitoes breed in containers that hold water. These include buckets, tarpaulins, tyres, pot plant bases, vases, boats and coconut shells. Roof guttering, rainwater tanks and palm fronds are also potential breeding sites.

Recommendations to control breeding include:

- tipping out containers which can hold water
- storing containers in a dry place
- throwing out rubbish that collects water

The dengue mosquito does not breed in rivers, swamps, open drains or creeks.

For more information, contact your local public health network



Central Public Health Unit Network servicing Brisbane Northside, Longreach, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay.

For contact details go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/cphun/>

Southern Public Health Unit Network servicing Brisbane Southside, Darling Downs, Roma, South Coast, South West Queensland, West Moreton

For contact details go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/sphun/>

Tropical Public Health Unit Network servicing Cairns, Mackay, Mount Isa and Gulf, Townsville

For contact details go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/tphun/>

Published by:

Communicable Diseases Unit
8th floor, Queensland Health Building
147-163 Charlotte Street,
BRISBANE 4000
GPO Box 48 BRISBANE 4001
Ph: +61 7 3234 1155
Fax: +61 7 3234 0057
<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/cdu/>

For medical advice, contact your doctor, hospital or health clinic.