

Dengue Fever Information Sheet

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What is it?

Dengue Fever, pronounced "den-gee", is a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The type of mosquito which carries Dengue Fever is not normally found in New Zealand.

Other infections spread by mosquito bites are listed at the end of this information sheet.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms usually start within 4 to 7 days after a bite from an infected mosquito.

Symptoms include:

- high fever
- headache
- pain behind the eyes
- joint, muscle and bone pain
- rash.

If you have any of these symptoms and you have recently travelled overseas you should see a doctor, and tell them where you have been. You may need to have blood tests.

How serious is it?

Young children and those with their first Dengue Fever infection have a milder illness than older children and adults.

Some people with Dengue Fever become very unwell with Dengue haemorrhagic (bleeding) fever, which can kill you. This is more common in people who have had Dengue Fever fever more than once.

Dengue Fever is common in the Pacific Islands. People who visit the Islands regularly are at risk of getting Dengue fever more than once.

If you have Dengue Fever and you notice any of these symptoms, go to hospital immediately:

- bad stomach pain

- vomiting
- red spots or patches on your skin
- bleeding from nose or mouth
- vomiting blood
- black poo
- drowsiness or irritability
- pale, cold, or clammy skin
- difficulty breathing.

Dengue Fever is a notifiable disease under the Health Act. This means your doctor must tell the District Health Board (DHB) if you have it.

Who is most at risk?

Dengue Fever is spread by infected mosquitoes which are not found in New Zealand. All cases of Dengue Fever in New Zealand have been in people who have recently travelled to other countries. Dengue Fever can be found in many other parts of the world including Australia, the Pacific Islands, Asia and Americas.

You cannot catch Dengue Fever in New Zealand, and if you have Dengue Fever you cannot pass it on to others.

How could I get infected?

Dengue Fever is spread by infected mosquitoes, which are not found in New Zealand. If you travel to an area where mosquitoes carry Dengue Fever, you could be infected by a mosquito bite. You cannot catch Dengue Fever from another person.

How do I protect myself and others?

There is no vaccine to prevent Dengue Fever. If you are travelling overseas, check with your doctor for the most up-to-date list of countries with Dengue Fever. Because Dengue Fever is spread by mosquitoes, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten.

- Use insect repellent, and check the label to make sure they contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535. Always use as directed.
- Cover as much of the body as possible with long, light-coloured clothing.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.
- Use clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) that has been treated with the insecticide permethrin.

If you have had Dengue Fever before, you should take extra care not to get it again, as you are at risk of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever.

Will I need to take time off work, school or preschool?

This will depend on how unwell you feel. Ask your doctor about this.

How is it treated?

There are no particular medicines for Dengue Fever. If you have Dengue Fever you should get plenty of rest, drink enough water, and take paracetamol for pain and fever.

Do not take aspirin and ibuprofen as these medicines might increase the risk of bleeding problems.

If your symptoms are bad or you get dehydrated you may need to go to hospital.

What are other diseases spread by mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes can give you Murray Valley encephalitis, Kunjin, Kokobera, Japanese encephalitis, West Nile virus, Ross River, Barmah Forest, Sindbis, Chikungunya and Zika. None of these diseases are currently found in New Zealand. They are all spread by infected mosquitoes overseas, and cause similar symptoms to Dengue Fever.

More information about Zika and Chikungunya can be found in our other information sheets.

Where can I get further information?

For more information on Dengue Fever or other diseases spread by mosquitoes please contact your doctor or Hawke's Bay District Health Board Population Health on (06) 834 1815. You can also phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 at any time of the day or night to speak to a registered nurse.

You can also find more information on these websites:

- www.cdc.gov/dengue/faqfacts
- www.wpro.who.int/topics/dengue