

# Dengue Fever

## *Information Sheet*

### What is it and how does a person become infected?

Dengue fever is a disease caused by bites from dengue-infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. These are present in many tropical countries. The types of *Aedes* mosquitoes that commonly carry dengue fever haven't established in New Zealand. They are found around the world in parts of Africa, Southern Asia, Pacific Islands and Central and South America. Dengue Fever is only spread by these mosquitoes and is not spread person to person.

### What are the signs and symptoms of the illness?

Dengue fever symptoms can last from two to seven days and usually include:

- a sudden fever
- an intense headache (especially behind the eyes)
- muscle and joint pain
- feeling very tired
- nausea/vomiting
- a skin rash

**If you get these symptoms while you travel or if you have recently travelled, you should see a doctor, drink plenty of fluids and use paracetamol against fever and pain. *Do not take aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen as there is a risk of bleeding.***

### How bad can it be?

Two to five days after dengue fever symptoms have begun, a small number of people (less than 5% of all cases) may rapidly develop a severe disease. Seek urgent hospital care because the disease is life-threatening.

### Warning signs of severe dengue include:

- severe abdominal pain
- persistent vomiting
- bleeding gums
- vomiting blood
- rapid breathing
- fatigue/restlessness

### The best protection against dengue fever is to avoid mosquito bites.

Because dengue fever is spread only by certain *Aedes* mosquitoes, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten when travelling to areas these mosquitoes live.

#### Indoors:

- Stay in places with screens on windows and doors. Turn on the air conditioning if you have it as cool air keeps mosquitoes away.
- Use mosquito nets impregnated with permethrin.
- Use insect sprays when mosquitoes are around.
- Use mosquito coils.

## Outdoors

- Use insect repellent, preferably containing diethyltoluamide (DEET). High concentrations of DEET protect better, but concentrations over 35% are not recommended if there is a choice of products available. This is because in rare cases they can cause poisoning. Other products containing 20-25% picaridin and those with about 30% lemon eucalyptus oil can also be used. Repellents should not be applied to wounds, irritated skin, the eyes or mouth.
- If you use both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first and then the repellent.
- Wear clothing that covers arms and legs and wear hats and shoes. Clothing can be treated with insect repellent.

Disease carrying *Aedes* mosquitoes can bite at any time of the day or night. They are most active at dawn and dusk as well as night time, always take precautions during those times.

## For further information please contact:



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