

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a tropical disease caused by a virus carried by mosquitoes. The virus can cause fever, headaches, rashes, and pain throughout the body. Most cases of dengue fever are mild and go away on their own after about a week.

About Dengue Fever

Dengue (DEN-gee) fever is caused by four similar viruses spread by mosquitoes, which are common in tropical and subtropical areas worldwide.

When a mosquito bites a person who has been infected with a dengue virus, the mosquito can become a carrier of the virus. If this mosquito bites someone else, that person can be infected with dengue fever. The virus can't spread directly from person to person.

Many kids with dengue fever don't have symptoms; others have mild symptoms that appear anywhere from 4 days to 2 weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms typically last for 2 to 7 days. Once kids have had the illness, they become immune to that particular type of the virus (although they can still be infected by any of the other three types).

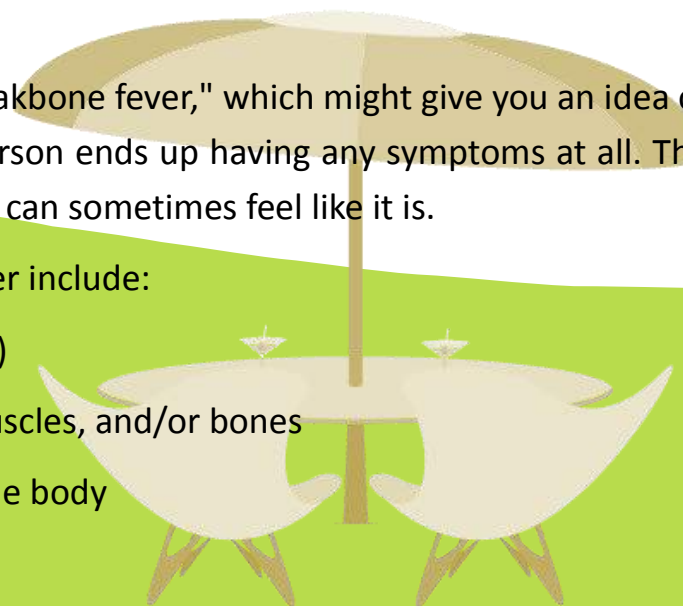
In rare cases, dengue fever can lead to more serious forms of the disease. These conditions, called dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome, can cause shock and death and need immediate medical treatment.

Signs & Symptoms

In the past, dengue fever was known as "breakbone fever," which might give you an idea of the symptoms it can cause — that is, if a person ends up having any symptoms at all. The fever isn't actually breaking any bones, but it can sometimes feel like it is.

Common signs and symptoms of dengue fever include:

- high fever, possibly as high as 105°F (40°C)
- pain behind the eyes and in the joints, muscles, and/or bones
- severe headache and rash over most of the body
- mild bleeding from the nose or gums
- bruising easily



Symptoms are generally mild in younger children and those who get infected with the disease for the first time. Older kids, adults, and those who have had a previous infection may experience moderate to severe symptoms.

People with dengue haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome will have the regular symptoms of dengue fever for 2 to 7 days. After the fever subsides, other symptoms worsen and can cause more severe bleeding; gastrointestinal problems like nausea, vomiting, or severe abdominal pain; and respiratory problems like difficulty breathing.

If left untreated, dehydration, heavy bleeding, and a rapid drop in blood pressure (shock) can occur. These symptoms are life threatening and require immediate medical attention.

Treatment

No specific treatment is available for dengue fever. Mild cases can be treated by giving lots of fluids to prevent dehydration and getting plenty of rest. Pain relievers with acetaminophen can ease the headaches and pain associated with dengue fever. **Pain relievers with aspirin or ibuprofen should be avoided, as they can make bleeding more likely.**

Prevention

In all cases of dengue infection, regardless of how serious symptoms are, efforts should be made to keep the infected person from being bitten by mosquitoes. This will help prevent the illness from spreading to others.

There is no vaccine to prevent dengue fever, so if children live in or will be visiting areas where dengue fever is likely, the only way to protect them from the disease is to minimize their chances of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Insect repellent with DEET can help minimise biting from mosquitos.

Don't give mosquitoes places to breed. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, so get rid of standing water in things like containers and discarded tires, and be sure to change the water in birdbaths, dog bowls, and flower vases at least once a week.

For further information on dengue fever please contact an Environmental Health Officer at Council on (07) 4099 9444 or visit the Queensland Health website at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/dengue/>.

