

Dengue Fever

(breakbone fever, dengue hemorrhagic fever)

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a disease caused by a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito, uncommon in Wisconsin. The disease is common in most tropical and subtropical areas including some islands in the Caribbean, Mexico, most countries of South and Central America, the Pacific, Asia and parts of tropical Africa. Cases originating in the United States are rare occurring occasionally in southern Texas. Occasionally, residents from or visitors to countries where dengue fever occurs may arrive in this country and develop dengue fever.

Who gets dengue fever?

Dengue fever may occur in people of all ages. The disease is usually milder in children than adults.

How is dengue fever spread?

Dengue fever is spread by the bite of infected (*Aedes aegypti*) mosquitoes. It cannot be spread from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of dengue fever and dengue hemorrhagic fever?

Dengue fever is characterized by the rapid development of a fever that may last from three to seven days, intense headache, joint and muscle pain, appetite loss, diarrhea, and a rash. The rash develops on the feet or legs 3-4 days after a person develops fever.

Symptoms of dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) includes a disorder in blood clotting that can result in internal bleeding, appetite loss, vomiting, high fever, headache, and abdominal pain. Shock and circulatory failure may occur. Untreated DHF may result in death in up to 50 percent of the cases.

How soon do symptoms occur?

Dengue fever may occur from 3-14 days after the bite from an infected mosquito, commonly within 4-7 days.

Does past infection with dengue virus make a person immune?

There are four distinct types of dengue virus. After being infected a person becomes immune to that type of dengue virus, but can still become infected with a different type of the virus.

What is the treatment for dengue fever?

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Intravenous fluids and oxygen therapy are often used for patients who experience shock during their illness.

What can be done to prevent the spread of dengue fever?

Since cases of dengue fever appearing in Wisconsin are imported, control measures are limited to advising travelers to affected areas of the risk of exposure to infected mosquitoes. Use of mosquito netting and repellents may be helpful in minimizing exposure.