



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

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Press Release

Ministry Declares Dengue Fever Outbreak for the Western Division

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services has declared a dengue fever outbreak in the Western Division where dengue fever case numbers have significantly risen above expected levels.

A total of **200** cases of dengue fever have been reported for the Western Division since the beginning of this year.

The majority of cases from the Western Division belong to the **10-29 years** age group.

In anticipation of this Dengue Outbreak, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services has a Dengue Action Plan that has been implemented and monitoring of the situation by both the divisional heads and Senior Managers have been ongoing.

More cases of dengue fever are expected every year during the rainy season from October to April and following periods of adverse weather conditions.

Divisional Health teams have been alerted to the increasing number of dengue fever cases above expected levels, in order to encourage early recognition, treatment, and referral of cases as required.

Divisional and Sub-divisional outbreak response teams have also been trained to investigate and to respond during outbreaks.

We continue to urge the public to learn about dengue fever, take precautions to prevent infection, and present early to a medical facility should you develop symptoms.

Please have a read of the Dengue Fact Sheet for more information.

Dengue Fever Factsheet

What it is?

Dengue fever is caused by the dengue virus. Humans become infected with the dengue virus when mosquitoes (black-and-white

striped mosquito) bite someone with dengue (blood meal) and then transmits the virus when it bites another healthy person.

Dengue fever affects millions of people around the world and most people usually recover from dengue fever after a few days, with some experiencing tiredness for a few weeks after. However, in some cases, dengue fever can be serious and lead to severe bleeding, coma and death if not treated in time.

How is it Spread?

Only infected mosquitoes transmit dengue fever. The mosquito contracts the virus when it bites an infected person. The mosquito is then infective for the rest of its life and can spread the virus every time it bites someone. The mosquito that spreads dengue fever likes to live in urban areas and especially in and around houses and in containers or other receptacles that can hold water (e.g. tyres, drums, uncovered water drums, flower vases etc.).

Severe dengue fever can be deadly. But most people will recover from dengue fever after an illness of 2-7 days. Although you may continue to feel tired for weeks afterwards.

What are the Symptoms?

Dengue Fever causes flu-like symptoms that generally last for 2-7 days. Dengue fever usually occurs after an incubation period of 4-10 days after the bite of the infected mosquito. High Fever (40°C) is usually accompanied by at least two of the following symptoms:

- Nausea, vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Headache
- Eye pain
- Muscle or joint pains
- Headaches
- Pain behind eyes
- A rash

Other symptoms may include;

- Swollen glands
- Diarrhoea
- Generally feeling unwell (malaise)

Severe Dengue

When developing into severe dengue, the critical phase takes place around 3-7 days after the first sign of illness. Temperature

will decrease; this does **NOT** mean the person is necessarily recovering. Special attention needs to be given to these **warning signs** as it could lead to severe dengue:

- Abdominal pain
- Persistent vomiting
- Vomiting blood
- Rapid breathing
- Fatigue/ restlessness
- Signs of bleeding such as bleeding gums, vomiting blood, black tarry stools (blood in stool), vaginal bleeding, bruising.

Failure to seek medical treatment in time if severe dengue signs are present may lead to severe bleeding, severe organ impairment, coma and even death.

How is it treated?

Seek medical attention immediately if you think you may have contracted dengue fever. Early diagnosis and management of symptoms is critical to reduce the risk of complications and avoid further spread of the virus.

Patients should get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids.

Take oral rehydration salts if they are available. Paracetamol such as Panadol can be taken to bring down fever and reduce joint pains.

DO NOT take aspirin or ibuprofen or any other pain medicine without checking with a doctor. These treatments can increase the risk of bleeding because they work to thin the blood.

When warning signs of severe dengue are present (listed above), it is imperative to **consult a doctor** and seek hospitalisation to manage the disease.

With proper medical care and early recognition, case-fatality rates are very low. However, the overall experience remains very discomforting and unpleasant.

How do I reduce my risk of getting dengue fever?

The best way to avoid dengue is to avoid mosquito bites and to destroy mosquito breeding habitats.

This means;

- Wear insect repellent when outdoors
- Use mosquito nets when sleeping
- Install mosquito/insect screens on your windows and doors

You should also take the time to destroy mosquito breeding habitats in and around your homes, villages and neighbourhoods by following these steps;

- Clear leaves and other rubbish from roof gutters and from around the house
- Remove old tyres, empty tins, bottles or drums, coconut shells/husks, or cover/bury them to prevent stagnant water forming for mosquitoes to breed in.
- Remove potential indoor breeding habitats including vases, water tray under fridge, empty bottles and cans etc.
- Cover stored water drums securely
- Cut and clear long grass

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