



## MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

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### Press Release

### Ministry Declares the End of the Dengue Fever Outbreak for the Western and Central Division

The Ministry for Health and Medical Services is pleased to declare the end of the dengue fever outbreak in the Western and Central Divisions.

Formally declared on the 13th of February for the Western Division and the 11th of April for the Central Division this year, the outbreaks have ended following the decrease in case numbers recorded.

Although the outbreak has decreased, dengue fever is still endemic in Fiji. Since cases can occur even outside of outbreak periods, the public is advised to maintain vigilance and to keep taking precautions against dengue fever.

#### **Dengue Fever Case Incidents**

According to recent reports, the number of cases has significantly decreased since June, and the current numbers are now in line with what is typical for this time of year. A total of 11,599 cases of dengue fever were reported throughout Fiji between January 1 and July 27. Of these, 5,124 cases were reported in the Western Division, 2,957 in the Central Division, 3,198 in the Northern Division, and 320 in the Eastern Division. Notably, there has been a notable drop in dengue cases in recent weeks.

#### **Initiatives for Public Health Response**

The Ministry of Health has been working with other ministries to coordinate an integrated public health response since the beginning of this year's dengue outbreak. Among the major initiatives have been:

Larvicides are applied to eradicate mosquito larvae; adult mosquitoes are sprayed; and breeding sites are cleaned up through ongoing house-to-house surveillance and larval sampling.

## **Programs for health awareness that inform the public about preventative measures**

In compliance with the Public Health Act, Cap 111, health inspectors have also carried out site inspections and issued abatement notices and fines to individuals who have mosquitoes on their properties. To slow the spread of dengue fever, preventive measures have been taken in every division.

The Ministry is still urging people to learn more about dengue fever, take precautions, and seek medical attention right away if they experience any symptoms.

**ENDS.**

## **Dengue Fever Factsheet**

### **What is it?**

Dengue fever is caused by the dengue virus. Humans become infected with the dengue virus when mosquitoes (black-and-white striped mosquitoes) bite someone with dengue (blood meal) and then transmit the virus when they bite 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 an 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 they 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, and 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 a 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 neighborhoods 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

**ENDS**