



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Dengue Fever

(breakbone fever, dengue hemorrhagic fever)

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a viral illness spread by mosquitoes. The disease occurs mainly in tropical Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. It is most common during the rainy season in areas infested with infected mosquitoes. Sometimes, persons arriving from other countries may enter the United States with dengue fever and infect local mosquitoes, as happened in Hawaii in 2001.

How do you get it?

The dengue virus is spread through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. Dengue is not spread directly from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of dengue fever?

The symptoms of dengue fever include sudden onset of fever, severe headaches, eye, joint, and muscle pain, and rash. The rash typically appears on the hands, arms, legs and feet 3 to 4 days after the fever begins. Minor bleeding problems can also occur. The symptoms usually go away completely within 1 to 2 weeks. Sometimes, people with dengue fever have blood clotting problems. When this happens, the illness is called dengue hemorrhagic fever. Dengue hemorrhagic fever is a very serious illness with abnormal bleeding and very low blood pressure (shock).

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start 5 to 6 days after being bitten by infected mosquitoes, but the onset can range from 2 to 15 days.

What is the treatment for dengue fever?

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Bed rest and acetaminophen (Tylenol) to treat fever and pain are recommended. Aspirin and NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen) are not recommended as they can make bleeding problems worse. There is currently no vaccine for dengue fever.

If you get dengue fever once, can you get it again?

Yes. There are four major types of dengue viruses. Having dengue fever with one type of dengue virus will not protect you from the other three types.

How can you keep from getting it?

When traveling to areas that have dengue fever, try to avoid exposure to mosquitoes. *Aedes* mosquitoes are usually most active in the early morning hours after daybreak, in the late afternoon before dark, and any time during the day when indoors or in shady areas.

Use mosquito netting over beds, and screens on windows and doorways.

Use mosquito repellents and wear appropriate clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and long pants that reduce exposure to mosquito bites.

Mosquitoes are drawn to dark colors; so if possible, wear white or light colored clothing when you are likely to be exposed to biting mosquitoes.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/dengue/dengue-qa.htm>