

Dengue Fever

What is Dengue?

Dengue Fever (Break-bone fever) is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Although they are most active during daylight hours biting from dawn till dusk, they will feed throughout the day indoors and during overcast weather.

Signs and Symptoms:

The incubation period for dengue is 5 to 8 days, symptoms include: fever, headache, aches and pains and cough. A rash spreading from the trunk to include the limbs and face occurs between days 3 and 5 of the illness.

Dengue fever may progress to the more serious dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF). This form of dengue is more common in children and those with repeated infections. Fortunately it is rarely seen in travellers. When DHF occurs, there is a sudden deterioration in condition between days 2 to 7. There may be bleeding under the skin, from the gums and the gastro-intestinal tract. Respiratory or renal failure may occur in severe cases.

There is no vaccine to prevent dengue so mosquito bite prevention is most important.

Preventing bites:

- Wear loose long sleeved tops and trousers (mosquitoes are attracted to dark clothes)
- Apply mosquito repellent containing DEET 30-50% to exposed skin - applied over sun cream.
- DEET containing repellent of no more than 50% can be used on small areas of children's skin, but should be avoided altogether in babies under 2 months of age.

- Alternative non-DEET containing repellents which are based on lemon eucalyptus oil can be used on children and adults if preferred - see the manufacturer's instructions.
- If pregnant, DEET up to 50% strength may be used sparingly. Discuss this with a travel health advisor.
- For extra protection consider using a clothing treatment which contains an insecticide called permethrin.