

# Dengue Fever

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## What is Dengue?

Dengue Fever (Break-bone Fever) is a viral infection transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. There are four distinct “serotypes” of Dengue virus, and immunity against one type does not confer immunity against the others.

The mosquitoes that transmit Dengue are most active during daylight hours biting from dawn till dusk. Their peak biting hours are early morning and in the evening before dusk.

The number of cases of dengue worldwide is increasing dramatically and an increasing number of UK Travellers have been getting the disease. Most cases in the UK are acquired in Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean.

## Signs and Symptoms:

The incubation period for dengue is 5-8 days. In about 75% of cases there are no symptoms, but when symptoms occur, they include:

- high fever
- headache
- pain behind the eyes
- muscle and joint pain
- nausea and vomiting
- swollen glands
- widespread red rash

Symptoms usually last for about 2-7 days although you may feel tired and slightly unwell for several weeks afterwards.

There is no specific treatment for Dengue, it usually involves relieving symptoms whilst the disease runs its course and most people recover spontaneously.

The following can help:

- Take paracetamol to relieve pain and fever – avoid aspirin or ibuprofen, as these can cause bleeding problems in people with dengue
- Get plenty of rest

- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration – if you're currently abroad, only drink bottled water from properly sealed bottles

## Dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF)

Dengue fever may progress to the more serious dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF). When DHF occurs, there is a sudden deterioration in condition between days 2 to 7. DHF is rare in travellers.

Symptoms include abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, change in temperature from very high temperature to low temperature, very low blood pressure (shock), fluid build-up in the lungs and severe bleeding. This form of dengue is more common in children and those with repeated infections.

Currently there is no vaccine available to travellers in the UK to prevent dengue. Therefore, Mosquito bite prevention is advised. It is particularly important during the day time hours, especially around dawn and dusk.

## Preventing bites:

- Avoidance of mosquito bites particularly during daylight hours
- Wear loose long-sleeved tops and trousers
- 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 in babies under 2 months of age.
- For extra protection consider using a clothing treatment which contains an insecticide called permethrin.

For more information about Dengue see:

<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/13/dengue>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dengue/>