

New York State Department of Health

Dengue Fever (breakbone fever, dengue hemorrhagic fever)

Last Reviewed: November 2006

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne disease caused by a virus. The disease is mainly tropical in origin but occasionally residents or visitors from other countries may arrive in this country with dengue fever. Although cases originating in the United States are virtually unknown, epidemic levels have recently been reported in parts of the Caribbean and Central America.

Who gets dengue fever?

Dengue fever may occur in people of all ages who are exposed to infected mosquitoes. The disease occurs mainly in tropical Asia and the Caribbean, usually during the rainy seasons in areas with high numbers of infected mosquitoes.

How is dengue fever spread?

Dengue fever is spread by the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes.

What are the symptoms of dengue fever?

Dengue fever is characterized by the rapid development of a fever that may last from five to seven days with intense headache, joint and muscle pain and a rash. The rash develops on the feet or legs three to four days after the beginning of the fever. The hemorrhagic form of dengue fever is more severe and associated with loss of appetite, vomiting, high fever, headache and abdominal pain. Shock and circulatory failure may occur. Untreated hemorrhagic dengue results in death in up to 50 percent of cases.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Dengue fever may occur from three to 14 days after exposure to an infected mosquito, commonly within four to seven days.

Does past infection with dengue virus make a person immune?

Infection with one of the four strains of dengue virus usually produces immunity to that strain but does not provide protection against the other strains.

What is the treatment for dengue fever?

There is no specific treatment available. Intravenous fluids and oxygen therapy are often used for patients who experience shock during their illness.

What can be done to prevent the spread of dengue fever?

Since cases of dengue appearing in New York are imported, control measures are limited to advising travelers to affected areas to minimize exposure to infected mosquitoes. Use of mosquito netting and repellents may be helpful in minimizing exposure.

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