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Dengue: What you need to know



Dengue (pronounced den' gee) is a disease that's transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 100 million cases of dengue fever worldwide each year. Dengue is rarely fatal, except for when it occurs among the very young, elderly people or those with other health conditions. Dengue cannot be spread directly from person to person.

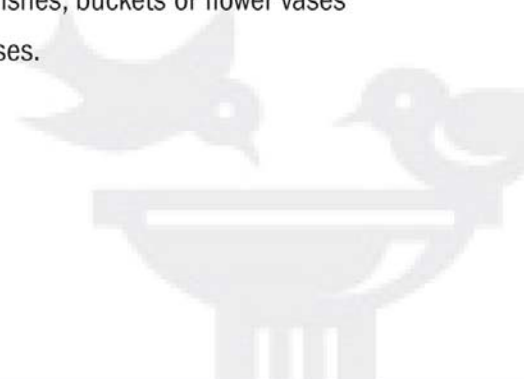
How can dengue be prevented?



Photo courtesy Istockphoto—Lydia Bilby

There is currently no vaccine for preventing dengue. The best way to prevent being infected is to avoid mosquito bites. If you are going to be outside—especially at dawn or dusk, when mosquitoes are most active—apply repellent containing 20 percent to 30 percent DEET as the active ingredient. If it's not too hot, wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants when outdoors. When indoors, use air conditioning or window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out.

Another effective way to prevent dengue is to prevent mosquitoes themselves. That means eliminating wet areas where mosquitoes lay their eggs. Look around your home and get rid of any standing water. Clean outdoor bird baths, pet dishes, buckets or flower vases regularly and tightly turn off hoses.



What are the symptoms of dengue?



Photo courtesy CDC—James Gathany

The common symptoms of dengue are:

- high fever
- severe headache
- severe pain behind the eyes
- joint pain
- muscle and bone pain
- rash and mild bleeding (e.g., nose or gums bleed, easy bruising)

If you suspect you have dengue, consult your doctor.

Where does dengue occur most?

Dengue is not very common in the continental United States and is most often linked to travel. However, scientists have warned that warming temperatures related to climate change may contribute to increased occurrence of dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases. Dengue often strikes in Puerto Rico and in many popular tourist destinations in Latin America and Southeast Asia. If you are traveling outside the United States, be sure to check for health advisories and obtain a list of countries that are reporting outbreaks.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Steve Debenport

When you're outside during mosquito season, health experts recommend using repellent.



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