



Epidemiological Unit

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# Dengue Fever Fact Sheet

## Dengue Infection

Dengue is an acute flu-like fever caused by a virus. It can cause disease in two forms:

- (a) Dengue Fever (DF) – marked by an onset of sudden high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, and pain in muscles and joints. Some may also have a rash.
- (b) Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF) – is a more severe form, seen only in a small proportion of those infected. Typically DHF is characterised by high continuous fever for less than 7 days; bleeding from various parts of the body (including nose, mouth and gums or skin bruising) ; severe continuous abdominal pain mainly due to enlarged liver, and shock in severe cases. This can lead to death. DHF is more serious in children.

## Transmission

Dengue Fever spreads via bite of an infected dengue mosquito. It can spread fast in urban areas when the mosquito population increase during rainy season.

## Clinical features

We may all confuse dengue fever with flu or a cold. Clinical features of dengue fever vary according to the age of the patient. Infants and young children may have non-specific febrile illness with rash. Older children/adults may have a mild febrile illness or classical incapacitating disease with abrupt onset and high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains, and rash.

1. Dengue Fever is a self limiting disease. For those who develop DHF hospital treatment is required.
2. Patient may feel ill and fever may last up to a week. They could feel weak and in low spirits for up to two weeks or so.

What you should really watch-out for are features of DHF.

## Treatment

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Treatment is symptomatic –

- keep the person home and allow to rest, this will help recover more quickly
- give plenty of fluids to drink
- allow to eat what they can
- Paracetamol may relieve symptoms of fever and joint pain. Aspirin and other NSAIDs must be avoided.

However, careful early clinical management frequently saves lives of DHF patients.

It would be advisable to see a qualified doctor if you/your child has high fever without any underlying reason for more than few days. However, even if dengue fever is suspected, you may not be expected to admit to a hospital.

## Prevention and Control

DF is transmitted through a mosquito. Therefore the best way to avoid dengue infection is to prevent mosquito bites. Still there is no vaccine or preventive drug. Hence, following tips are useful:

- Avoid mosquito bites during day time by wearing protective clothing.
- Use mosquito nets when sleeping (both day and night)
- **Get rid of mosquito breeding sites regularly in and around your household.** These usually are discarded tyres, plastic containers, coconut shells, leaf axils, blocked roof gutters, bird baths flower vases, or any other place where rain water collect.

If you/your child develop dengue fever try to be protected from exposure to mosquito bites in order to avoid further spreading of the infection. Especially children should stay at home during the illness, ideally under a mosquito net when resting.