

DENGUE FEVER

Public Health Act 2005



The dengue mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*) breeds in backyards throughout North Queensland and can easily transmit the potentially fatal dengue fever virus to you and your family. You could be breeding dangerous mosquitoes on your property right now. It's up to every one of us to take responsibility for our own safety and the safety of our family and neighbours by ensuring our property is free of potential dengue breeding sites – it's also the law.

WHAT IS DENGUE FEVER?

Dengue fever is a severe flu-like illness carried by infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. It is important to see a doctor immediately if you or anyone you're travelling with shows any symptoms of dengue. Typical symptoms include:

- » sudden onset of fever lasting 3 to 7 days
- » intense headache and pain behind the eyes
- » muscle and joint pain
- » loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea
- » skin rash
- » minor bleeding (from nose or gums)
- » extreme fatigue.

Recovery from dengue fever can include prolonged fatigue and depression lasting up to several months – this varies from person to person.

Dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) is a more severe form of the same virus and is caused through reinfection. This virus may cause extensive bleeding and can be fatal if unrecognised and not treated.

HOW IS DENGUE FEVER SPREAD?

Dengue fever is transmitted to people by the bite of an *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The mosquito transmits the virus by biting an infected person and then biting someone else. The virus is not directly contagious and cannot be spread directly from person to person.

HOW TO AVOID DENGUE FEVER

The best way to avoid dengue fever is to rid your home of mosquito breeding sites. Chances are high that if a member of your family gets dengue, then they were infected by a mosquito that bred around your house.

Dengue mosquitoes only breed in containers that hold fresh water. You can help stop the spread of the virus by breaking the breeding cycle.

Regularly check your house and yard and monitor possible mosquito breeding sites around your house by:

- » tipping out any containers holding water, store them in a dry place or throw them out
- » emptying all flower vases, bird baths, and other receptacles containing water
- » wiping internal surfaces of containers to remove any unhatched eggs.

Also take basic precautions against mosquitoes by:

- » screening the windows and doors of your house
- » using insect repellent
- » applying surface spray to dark areas like under tables and chairs and in wardrobes
- » wearing light coloured and loose-fitting clothes at dawn and dusk and, e.g. bird baths and rainwater tanks.

WHY WIPE CONTAINERS CLEAN?

Dengue mosquito eggs (as with all mosquitoes) need water to hatch. The adult mosquito lays the eggs on the water surface; the eggs then float to the container side and attach to the container at the water surface height. As the water level drops, the eggs remain on the side of the container waiting for water to be added. Once they are wet again, they take about three days to hatch into "wigglers" and then become adult mosquitoes.

When you wipe out a container, you remove the eggs from the container, therefore their ability to hatch. Refilling of containers can re-commence the life cycle.



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COMMON DENGUE BREEDING SITES

Common dengue breeding sites around the house and yard include:

- » pot plant bases
- » fallen palm fronds, bromeliads and coconut shells
- » flower vases
- » buckets, tin cans and plastic containers
- » kids toys
- » disused car tyres
- » boats
- » roof guttering
- » rainwater tanks
- » tarpaulins.

The dengue mosquito does not breed in rivers, swamps, open drains, creeks or mangroves.

The mosquito rarely flies more than 200m from its breeding sites and may have frequent small meals of blood so a single mosquito can quickly infect many people.

WHAT DO EGGS LOOK LIKE?

The eggs of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito are tiny, black, flat and torpedo shaped. And can often be found just above the water line in containers.

CAN I GET DENGUE FEVER MORE THAN ONCE?

Yes! There are four major types of dengue viruses. Contracting one type of dengue fever will give immunity from only that type. If further types of dengue fever are contracted you have an increased risk of developing haemorrhagic effects.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR DENGUE?

There is no specific medication or course of treatment to cure dengue fever – prevention is the best cure.

If you think you have been infected with dengue fever and start to develop symptoms, see a doctor immediately. While there is no cure, your doctor is able to provide treatment to make the symptoms less severe.

OTHER TIPS TO REMEMBER

Using fans and air-conditioners will help disrupt the feeding of mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become inactive with decreased temperature and will be less likely to feed.

Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours. When covering up, remember that wearing light colours will act as a deterrent. Loose fitting, long sleeved clothing is also harder for a mosquito to bite through and reduces the area for biting.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information visit Council's website townsville.qld.gov.au, or call Council's Customer Service Centre on 13 48 10.