



Dengue Fever

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a severe flu-like illness caused by one of four dengue viruses. A more severe form of the illness is dengue hemorrhagic fever.

How is it spread?

Dengue viruses are spread to humans by the bite of infected female *Aedes* mosquito. Mosquitoes generally get the virus by feeding on infected humans. It is not spread from person to person or from animals to people. This type of mosquito primarily feeds for several hours after daybreak and for several hours before dark.

What are the symptoms?

Dengue fever in adults is characterized by a sudden onset of high fever; severe headache; pain behind the eyes; joint, muscle and bone pain and a rash. Many people also have nausea and vomiting. Generally, younger children have a milder illness.

Dengue hemorrhagic fever can be fatal if not recognized and treated promptly. Symptoms include those listed above. After the fever goes away, vomiting, severe abdominal pain and difficulty breathing may develop. The patient may bruise easily, bleed from the nose or gums or have internal bleeding.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Patients should rest and drink lots of fluids. People with dengue fever should be under the care of a health care provider. A person who develops vomiting or severe abdominal pain in the first 24 hours after the fever goes away should go immediately to a hospital for evaluation.

How can you prevent dengue fever?

The only method of controlling or preventing dengue fever is to control the mosquitoes that carry the virus. In the Americas, the mosquito breeds primarily in stagnant water. Clean clogged gutters and throw away used tires, unused pots and anything else that holds water. Change birdbath water weekly and cover rain barrels.

People traveling to areas where dengue fever is common should remain in well-screened or air-conditioned areas when possible. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants that cover the arms and legs. Apply insect repellent to both skin and clothing. There is no vaccine available.

For more information on dengue fever, call the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or visit our website at www.myguilford.com or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov or the World Health Organization at www.who.int