



August 2011

Dengue Fever

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a serious illness that occurs in tropical and sub-tropical regions around the world, mainly in populated areas. It is caused by one of four subtypes of the dengue virus, which is spread by mosquitoes. About 100 million cases of dengue fever occur worldwide each year.

A more severe and sometimes fatal complication of this disease is called dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF). DHF causes extreme hemorrhage and shock, and is more likely to develop after a second bout of dengue fever.

Dengue fever seldom causes death. After someone has recovered from dengue fever, he/she will have lifelong immunity against that virus. However, he/she may still be susceptible to a subsequent infection by another of the three subtypes of the dengue fever virus.

What are the symptoms of dengue fever?

Dengue fever begins with a sudden, high fever, a severe headache, and tremendous pain in the muscles and joints. A measles-like rash may appear three to five days after the onset of fever. Recovery may be associated with prolonged fatigue and depression. Symptoms develop three to 14 days following infection with the virus.

How is dengue fever spread?

The virus that causes dengue fever is spread through the bite of the female Aedes mosquito. These mosquitoes acquire this virus while feeding on the blood of a person infected with dengue fever. The infected mosquitoes spread the virus through their bite to other susceptible people.

How is dengue fever prevented?

There is no vaccine available against dengue fever. The best prevention is to minimize the risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito by following these precautions:

- Protect your skin by wearing clothing that covers arms and legs
- Where possible, stay in well-screened areas
- Use an insect repellent that contains DEET
- Avoid wearing perfumes and using shampoo or soap that is high in perfume
- Eliminate mosquito breeding grounds, such as water-filled, man-made containers (e.g. old tires, metal drums, earthenware pots)

Is there a treatment for dengue fever?

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Aspirin is not to be taken. Travellers who develop flu-like illness within two weeks after returning from areas where dengue fever occurs should promptly see their doctor.

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca