



Raising Awareness of Dengue Disease in the United States Strategies for Prevention and Early Identification

FAQs to Address with Patients

Q What is dengue?

A Dengue disease, also called “dengue fever” or “break-bone fever,” is a viral illness that affects up to 400 million people worldwide every year. Of those that contract the disease, 100 million will get sick from the infection. It is considered a tropical disease because it is mainly encountered in tropical areas of the world.

Q How do people get dengue?

A Dengue is spread by contact with mosquitos. The mosquitos carry the dengue virus and spread the virus when biting a person and taking their blood. This means that people living in warm, wet climates with a lot of standing water (ideal for mosquito breeding) are more likely to get dengue. Additionally, mothers can pass the disease to their child if infected while pregnant.

There are 4 different types of dengue virus, meaning people can get sick again from dengue even if they already had it in the past. For example, a person who had dengue virus type 2 can still get sick again if they contract dengue virus type 4.

Q Why is dengue important?

A While dengue is not currently very prevalent in the US, it can still be found in certain states and territories. Cases are starting to rise in places such as Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, and Hawaii. In addition, the type of mosquitos that carry dengue can be found in about half of areas within the United States, which means that there is potential for the disease to spread and become more prevalent in the US over time. One important thing to think about is how climate change and rising populations will affect how often we see dengue. These two factors are expected to increase the exposure of dengue significantly, with 6 billion people being affected by 2080.

Q How do I know if I have dengue?

A The most common symptom of dengue is fever, but it can also cause nausea, vomiting, rashes, aches, and pains (typically eye pain, muscle pain, or bone pain). These symptoms usually last for 2-7 days, and most people will recover by day 7.

However, about 1 in 20 people who get sick with dengue will develop severe dengue, which can result in shock and internal bleeding. Warning signs to look out for include belly pain, bleeding from the nose or gums, vomiting blood, or feeling very tired. Patients having these symptoms should be sent to the hospital as soon as possible.

Q Are there vaccines available to prevent dengue?

A There are vaccines available that help prevent dengue. One of the vaccines can be given to children ages 9 through 16, but they must have a test showing they have had dengue previously to qualify. However, there is new vaccine available that can be given to both children and adults if they are between the ages of 4 and 60, and it does not require blood testing to receive it.

Q If I don't qualify for the vaccine, what are some other things I can do to prevent dengue?

A There are many things you can do to prevent dengue. Preventing mosquito bites is one of the most important ways to prevent the disease. Using an insect repellent approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can help you with this. Any properly applied insect repellent containing one of the listed active ingredients can help reduce your risk, and they are safe for use even in pregnant and breastfeeding people. Covering your arms and legs and using mosquito netting while sleeping when traveling to high-risk areas can also help. If you live in a high-risk area, using screens on windows and doors or using air conditioning can lower your exposure to mosquitos. You can also minimize the amount of standing water in the area so mosquitos cannot lay their eggs by keeping things such as trash containers, flowerpots, or buckets dry and out of open spaces.

Effective insect repellent active ingredients:

- DEET
 - Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the US)
 - IR3535
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)
 - Para-methane-diol (PMD)
 - 2-undecanone
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Q So, should I be worried about dengue?

A The good news is dengue is still a rare disease in the US, and even in high-risk locations of the world you have about a 1% chance per month of contracting dengue. Still, using insect repellent while outside, keeping your legs and arms covered, and keeping your living areas dry and cool can help you decrease your risk, and getting vaccinated can further decrease risk.