

Dengue Fever – General Warning

With Singapore approaching the warmer months of the year, cases of dengue fever are expected to rise.

The principal vector mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, is most frequently found in or near human habitations and prefers to feed on humans during the daytime. It has two peak periods of biting activity: in the morning for several hours after daybreak and in the late afternoon for several hours before dark. The mosquito may feed at any time during the day, especially indoors, in shady areas, or when it is overcast. Mosquito breeding sites include artificial water containers such as discarded tires, uncovered barrels, buckets, flower vases or pots, cans, and cisterns.

Dengue fever has an incubation period of 3-14 days (most commonly 4-7 days), and is characterized by sudden onset of high fever, severe frontal headache, and joint and muscle pain. Many patients have nausea, vomiting, and rash. The rash appears 3-5 days after onset of fever and can spread from the torso to the arms, legs, and face. The disease is usually a self-limiting one. There are non-specific viral symptoms in many cases, but dengue can also present as a severe, sometimes fatal disease characterized by bleeding and low blood pressure (dengue haemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome).

No vaccine is available. Travellers are advised that they can reduce their risk of acquiring dengue by remaining in well-screened or air-conditioned areas when possible, wearing clothing that adequately covers the arms and legs, and applying insect repellent to both skin and clothing. The most effective repellents are those containing N,N-diethylmetatoluamide (DEET). The RID range of insect repellents from Australia is exclusive to International Medical Clinic. RID with its active ingredient of DEET, has been proven for decades as most effective in repelling biting insects. IMC carries the Tropical Strength range, which provides up to 6 hours protection, while our low irritant Kids RID is suitable for children over 6 months of age and provides protection for up to 3 hours. Also in our range is a SPF 30+ sun screen repellent combination.

For infants below 6 months of age, we have available Permethrin Treatment Kits. Permethrin is a naturally occurring insecticide which can be used safely to treat your infant's clothes.

Families travelling abroad during this summer vacation should 'mosquito-proof' their homes. Simple preventive measures such as covering the toilet bowls, gully and floor traps and clearing stagnant water in pails and vases before leaving for vacation can keep the dengue-causing mosquito at bay.