

It's raining ! Keep away from mosquitoes to avoid dengue

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- Dr. KS Harshith -

With monsoons around the corner, unhygienic water clogging and a plethora of diseases come along too. While most people rejoice the fresh showers coming down from the sky, many others often end up being trapped in the various infections of the season. Most of these infections are a result of unhealthy, unclean surroundings, mosquitoes, and weather fluctuations. One of the major infections doing the rounds this season is the dengue fever again.

Around 400 million instances of dengue infections occur each year across the globe. This year itself, over 1000 dengue cases have been registered by Bengaluru's municipal corporation, the Bruhath Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).

Transmitted by the bite of an Aedes mosquito infected with a dengue virus, dengue fever is a mosquito-borne disease. Having bitten a person with dengue in their blood, the mosquito becomes infected. Occurring usually in tropical and subtropical areas, dengue resolves within days to weeks. However, dengue does not spread directly from one person to another.

Symptoms in dengue fever generally show three to fourteen days after the infection. If the infected person has a mild dengue fever, he/she is likely to experience a high fever, rash, and muscle pain as well as joint pain. However, in its severe form, dengue fever (also termed dengue hemorrhagic fever) causes severe bleeding, damage to lymph and blood vessels, a sudden drop in blood pressure (shock) and can even be fatal. Sometimes people become infected with the virus a second time and then are at a much greater risk of developing the severe form of the disease.

SYMPTOMS for dengue are inclusive of:

- Sudden, high fever
- Severe headache
- Vomiting
- Muscle and joint pain
- Serious bleeding and shock in case of severe dengue
- Pain behind the eyes
- Fatigue

- Nausea, vomiting
- Skin rash
- Mild bleeding (such a nose bleed, bleeding gums, or easy bruising)s

The symptoms during a mild dengue fever are often likely to be confused with or mistaken for those of viral infections or flu, especially due to the high fever that is a major common symptom in both the diseases. However, one noticeable difference in dengue and other viral fever is that dengue is accompanied with severe joint pain and muscle pain. Also while viral fever usually subsides in three-five days, dengue fever easily takes at least a week. Also viral fever comes with severe chills and body ache, but in dengue fever the fever often lasts for up to seven days with a drop and then slight resurgence towards the end, alongside a headache, and painful and swollen joints.

Usually, those younger children and people who have never encountered infection earlier are likely to have milder cases in comparison to older children and adults. However, serious problems cannot be dismissed. People with weakened immune systems also tend to be at greater risk for developing dengue hemorrhagic fever.

CAUSES

Either one of the four types of dengue viruses cause the dengue fever. These viruses are spread by mosquitoes that breed and survive in and around human lodgings. The virus enters the mosquito when it bites an infected person. Further when the same mosquito bites an uninfected person, the virus gets into the person's bloodstream and results in fever.

PREVENTION

The most obvious way to save yourself from dengue is to prevent bites by infected mosquitoes, especially if you reside in a tropical area. You must strive to keep the mosquito population in your surrounding very low and maintain hygiene.

In 2019, the Food and Drug Administration(FDA) approved Dengvaxia, a vaccine to help prevent dengue from occurring in adolescents aged 9 to 16 who have already been infected by dengue.

Some STEPS that can be taken to prevent yourself from dengue are:

- Use mosquito repellents, even if you are indoors.
- When outdoors, try and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into socks.
- Ensure window and door screens are free of holes. Use mosquito nets, if sleeping areas are not screened or air conditioned.
- If you are feel you are experiencing dengue symptoms, consult your doctor.
- Get rid of places where mosquitoes can breed like old tires, cans, or flower pots that collect rain.
- Change the water in outdoor bird baths and pets' water dishes regularly
- If someone at home has dengue fever, make extra efforts to protect yourself and other family members from mosquitoes.

TREATMENT for dengue fever consists of fluids and paracetamol. However, severe cases also need hospital care. It is best to consult your doctor and receive some essential medical advice.

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