

Dengue Fever

Up until August, there are already 34 cases of Dengue fever reported so far in Hong Kong this year, in comparison to 31 cases in the whole year of 2006. This is a serious and potentially life threatening infection that we can prevent from.

Dengue fever is an acute infection, with a sudden onset of fever for 3-5 days, severe headache and pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain, nausea and rash. Sometimes there might also be some mild bleeding (eg. Bleeding gums). Worsening of the disease can lead to Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever, which can lead to profuse bleeding and ultimately death.

This infection is solely being transmitted to human by certain types of mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*). It cannot be transmitted from man to man. Although it is epidemic in many SE Asian countries, so far, nearly all cases in Hong Kong are found in people that have been infected by mosquitoes while travelling or working outside Hong Kong. Therefore, anyone that has returned from travel to a dengue-infected area and fallen sick within 3-14 days, especially with bleeding signs, should seek medical assistance immediately.

As there are no effective vaccines to prevent this to date, preventive measures are very important. Personally, when we travel, we should wear light coloured, long sleeved shirts and trousers and apply effective DEET containing mosquito repellents. Remaining indoor as much as possible and using mosquito screen or nets are also important.

We can also help stopping the breeding of mosquitoes by preventing accumulation of stagnant waters. Covering all containers tightly before discarding to rubbish bins, changing water for plants at least once a week and keeping all drains free from blockage would be very helpful environmental measures.

Source: Dr. Grace Tien En Loy, MD, Blue Care Medical Centre