

What is Dengue Fever?

Dengue Fever, sometimes referred to as breakbone fever, is a virus caused by mosquitoes. There are four serotypes of the virus called Dengue 1, 2, 3 & 4. In Queensland, [*Aedes aegypti*](#) is the principle carrier and is known as a container breeder. The dengue mosquito is highly domesticated and breeds in containers which hold fresh water, living around houses and biting during the day both in and outdoors.

Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever is a more serious form of the virus and can be potentially fatal, especially to young children.

How are it transmitted?

Both Dengue fever and Dengue Haemorrhagic fever are transmitted via the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed off a person whose blood contains enough of the dengue virus particles to cause illness. As these mosquitoes often have multiple feeds often from more than one person, the virus can spread quite quickly within a short period of time.

What are the symptoms?

Typical symptoms of dengue include:

- a sudden onset of fever for 3-5 days
- an intense headache
- severe muscle and joint pain (hence the nickname breakbone fever)
- loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea
- skin rash
- minor bleeding (gums and nose)
- extreme fatigue

Dengue haemorrhagic fever includes the above symptoms accompanied by excessive bleeding; respiratory failure and can sometimes lead to a condition called Dengue Shock Syndrome. It is a potentially fatal condition if left untreated, more frequent in children than adults.

It is important that if anyone has any symptoms of dengue, it is vital that medical treatment is sort and the case reported to relevant authorities to prevent further infection of others and an outbreak occurring.

Why is it a threat to you?

Anyone who lives or visits Emerald are at risk of contracting the virus because:

- A large population of the dengue mosquito has been identified here by both Qld Health and Emerald Shire Council
- It only takes one person infected with the virus to visit Emerald and infect mosquitoes here (and with the increasing number of visitors to the area, this is a very real possibility, especially from those who have travelled overseas in countries where dengue is widespread)
- It only takes one locally acquired case of dengue to cause an outbreak (with the mosquito already a resident here of course)
- There is no medical cure or vaccine to provide immunity

How do you avoid getting Dengue Fever?

The best way to avoid getting dengue fever is to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes. This means getting rid of breeding sites in and around your home (because the dengue mosquito generally hangs around the home, rarely travelling further than a 200m radius from breeding sites).

Common Breeding Sites:

Common breeding sites of the dengue mosquito include:

- Pot plant bases
- Tyres
- Buckets
- Rainwater tanks
- Tin cans and plastic containers
- Tarpaulins
- Bromeliads
- Roof guttering
- Pet water bowls
- Tree holes
- Bird baths

Basically, anything that holds water in the home and out in the yard can be a potential breeding site for the dengue mosquito.

Places that the dengue mosquito does NOT breed include:

- Rivers
- Swamps
- Open drains
- Creeks
- Mangroves

An important checklist follows that should be completed during the wet season (typically November to March, but not restricted to those months) and anytime after it has rained.

It is important that when tipping out water from receptacles, you thoroughly wipe the inside of containers with a cloth to remove mosquito eggs and then refill with fresh water. It is essential that you destroy the cloth by burning or placing in a bin and not wash it as the eggs require water to hatch.

[Checklist](#)

For more information:

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Emerald Shire Council's Environmental Health Services on (07) 4982 8348.