

Don't Let the Bugs Bite: Preventing Dengue and Other Diseases Spread by Mosquitoes

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC - safer, healthier people.

Mosquitoes! You might think that they are just an itchy annoyance. But did you know that mosquitoes can spread at least 36 diseases? In this and future podcasts, we'll talk about some of these diseases, such as dengue, malaria, and West Nile fever.

CDC has received a great many reports this year about one of these diseases: dengue fever. Dengue is a disease caused by a virus. It is found in tropical and subtropical areas of the world, such as parts of Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, Australia and the South Pacific, the Caribbean, South and Central America, and in Africa.

Dengue is transmitted by a type of mosquito that usually bites during the day, although it's particularly active at dusk and dawn. This mosquito is found in towns and cities, as well as in the countryside, often in and around houses.

The main symptoms of dengue include high fever, severe headache, nausea, and joint and muscle pain, which gives it the nickname of "break-bone" fever. Sometimes patients with dengue also have a rash. The worst part of the illness can last up to 10 days, and a complete recovery can take 2 to 4 weeks—more than long enough to ruin your vacation. Most people with dengue get better on their own, but in a few cases—about one in a hundred—dengue can progress to a more severe form with bleeding, which can be fatal.

This year, many countries have reported more people getting sick with dengue than in past years, so protection measures are especially important. No vaccine is available to prevent dengue, and there is no specific treatment. However, travelers can reduce their risk by protecting themselves from mosquito bites. If you are traveling to an area where dengue or other mosquito-borne diseases have been reported—and this year that's everywhere in the tropics—CDC recommends the following measures:

- Use an insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin on exposed skin. DEET, in concentrations of 30 to 50 percent, is effective for several hours. Picaridin, which is available in 7 percent and 15percent concentrations, must be applied more frequently. If you use a sunscreen, apply it first, then put on the insect repellent.
- DEET is recommended for both adults and children over 2 months of age. For babies younger than 2 months, use a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.
- When you go outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- If you can arrange it, stay in a place that has air-conditioned rooms with window screens. If that is not possible, be sure there are mosquito nets over the beds.
- Empty or cover any containers that can collect water, such as barrels, flower pots, and cisterns, because the mosquitoes that transmit dengue breed in standing water.

- If you get sick with a fever, either during travel or after your return, see a health-care provider and tell him or her about your overseas travel.

And CDC always recommends that anyone who travels overseas should see a health-care provider or travel medicine specialist before the trip. As soon as travelers make their airplane reservations, they should also make an appointment to see their doctor. This way, they will have time to get needed vaccinations and make other important preparations.

You can find out more about dengue and other diseases transmitted by mosquitoes at the CDC Travelers' Health website: www.cdc.gov/travel.

[Announcer] The CDC Travelers' Health and Animal Importation Branch is pleased to present this travel tip and wishes all travelers a safer, healthier trip.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family, and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.