

What Head Start or Child Care Programs Should Know About Dengue

What is dengue?

Dengue is an infection caused by one of four dengue viruses. It is spread to people by infected mosquito bites. Globally, there are about 100 million people who get sick with dengue each year. Because there are four dengue viruses, people can get dengue up to four times. Dengue can be deadly.

What are the symptoms of dengue?

Most infected people have mild or no symptoms. For those who get sick, the most common symptoms are high fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, joint, muscle or bone pain, rash, vomiting, and unusual bleeding (e.g., nose or gums bleed, unusual bruising). Generally, younger children and those with their first dengue infection have a milder illness than older children and adults. Symptoms typically last between 2-7 days.

Severe dengue is an emergency

1 in 4 people who get sick with dengue will not recover and will develop signs and symptoms of severe dengue. Severe dengue is a medical emergency and requires immediate medical care, sometimes hospitalization.

How is dengue spread?

Dengue is mainly transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes. The mosquitoes that spread dengue also spread other diseases. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area, usually a tropical area, where dengue virus is found is at risk for infection.

How is dengue diagnosed?

See your healthcare provider if you or your child develop symptoms (fever, headache, rash, joint pain, red eyes). Because dengue can be confused with other illnesses, your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for dengue or other similar diseases like Zika virus or chikungunya.

Implications for Head Start or child care programs

- Dengue cannot be spread through saliva, coughing, or touching. As usual, children should stay home if they have a fever.
- Programs should review their emergency plans and staff availability to ensure adequate coverage, if needed.

Help protect your family from getting dengue

- There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat dengue.
- Once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, or trash containers. Check inside and outside your home.
- Use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. Use the air conditioner if you can.

Protect your family from mosquito bites

- Cover up! Wear protective clothing. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants covering most of the body.

Use EPA-registered insect repellents

- Follow label instructions, reapply as directed.
- If you are using sunscreen – apply it first then put on the insect repellent.

How to apply insect repellent on children

- Spray insect repellent on your hands then put it on your child's face.
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used in children less than 3 years old.
- Don't use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months.
- Children <2 months may be protected by covering carrier with mosquito netting.
- Don't put insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin.

How to talk to children about dengue

- If children have questions, make time to listen and answer their questions.
- Speak in a calm tone of voice. Use reassuring words.
- Keep all explanations easy for your child to understand.

Where can I learn more?

- [Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers on talking with children about infectious disease outbreaks.](#)
- [EPA approved repellents](#)