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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS(FAQs)

What is Dengue fever (DF), dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) and dengue shock syndrome (DSS)?

Dengue infection is caused by a virus. It occurs commonly as dengue fever. Occasionally the patient suffering from dengue may develop bleeding from common sites like nose, gums or skin. Sometimes, the patient may have coffee ground vomiting or black coal tar like stools. It indicates bleeding from gastro- intestinal tract. The dengue fever with bleeding is called dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF). It can be fatal if it remains unrecognized and not properly treated. Rarely the patient suffering from dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) may develop shock, then it is called dengue shock syndrome (DSS).

When should Dengue be suspected?

Dengue should be suspected when a person has sudden onset of fever. The fever is usually high 103-105 degrees F or 39-40 degrees C. It is accompanied with severe headache (mostly in the forehead), pain behind the eyes, body aches and pains, rash on the skin and nausea or vomiting. The fever lasts for 5-7 days. In some patients, fever comes down on 3rd or 4th day but comes back. All the above symptoms and signs may not be present in the patient. The patient feels much discomfort after the illness

There are several types of fever, when should dengue be suspected?

The characteristics of dengue that make it different from other causes of fever are the pain behind the eyes, severe pains in the muscles, severe joint pains, and skin rashes. These features make the diagnosis of suspected Dengue likely. The severe joint pain caused by DF is the reason why DF is also called *break-bone fever*.

Can you get dengue again after suffering from it once?

It is possible to get dengue more than once. Dengue is caused by a virus which has four different strains. Being affected by one strain offers no protection against the others. A person can suffer from dengue more than once in her/his lifetime.

Can the diagnosis of dengue be confirmed?

There are laboratory tests that provide direct or indirect evidence for dengue fever. These tests provide evidence for the occurrence of dengue infection. There are some additional tests that can help to identify the type of dengue infection. The tests for confirmation of Dengue should be done in reliable laboratories.

How can someone get dengue fever?

Dengue fever occurs following the bite of an infected mosquito called *Aedes aegypti*. It breeds in clean water in small water collections in and around human dwellings. The mosquito gets the Dengue virus after biting an infected human being.

Can I get dengue fever from another person?

Dengue does not spread directly from person to person. It is only spread through the bite of an infected mosquito.

When does dengue develop after getting the infection?

After the entry of the virus in the person, it multiplies in the lymph glands in the body. The symptoms develop when the virus has multiplied in sufficient numbers to cause the symptoms. This happens generally about 4-6 days after getting infected with the virus.

Can people suffer from dengue and not appear ill?

Yes. There are many people who are infected with the virus and do not suffer from any signs or symptoms of the disease. For every patient with symptoms and signs there may be 4-5 persons with no symptoms or with very mild symptoms.

Can dengue fever be treated at home?

Most patients with dengue fever can be treated at home. They should take rest, drink plenty of fluids that are available at home and eat nutritious diet. Whenever available, Oral Rehydration Salt/ORS (commonly used in treating diarrhoea) is preferable. Sufficient fluid intake is very important. It is important to look for danger signs and contact the doctor as soon as any one or more of these are found.

What is the treatment? Is it curable?

Like most viral diseases there is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Antibiotics do not help. *Paracetamol* is the drug of choice to bring down fever and joint pain. Other medicines such as *Aspirin* and ibuprofen (*Brufen*) should be avoided since they can increase the risk of bleeding. Doctors should be very careful when prescribing medicines. Any medicine that decreases platelets should be avoided.

Can people die from dengue fever?

People who suffer from dengue fever have no risk of death but some of them develop Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever or Dengue Shock Syndrome. In some of these cases death can occur. With proper treatment, the patients with Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever and Dengue Shock Syndrome can recover fully. Treatment provided in time can save most lives.

What are the warning signs and symptoms in dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) ?

Generally the dengue haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome occur after 3-5 days of fever. By this time, *fever has often come down. This may mislead many of us to believe that the patient is heading towards recovery. In fact, this is the most dangerous period that requires high vigilance from care-givers.* The signs and symptoms that should be looked for are severe pain abdomen, persistent vomiting, bleeding from any site like, bleeding in the skin appearing as small red or purplish spots, nose bleed, bleeding from gums, passage of black stools like coal tar. Take the patient to the hospital whenever the first two signs, namely, severe pain in the abdomen and persistent vomiting are detected. Usually it is too late if we wait until bleeding has occurred. The most dangerous type of dengue is the dengue shock syndrome. It is recognized by signs like excessive thirst, pale and cold skin (due to very low blood pressure), restlessness and a feeling of weakness.

Are there any long term ill effects of dengue fever?

Most people who suffer from dengue fever recover in 1-2 weeks time. Some may feel tired for several weeks. However, if symptoms persist after this period, consult a doctor.

Where does the dengue mosquito live?

The highly domestic mosquito *Aedes aegypti* rests indoors, in closets and other dark places. Outside it rests where it is cool and shaded. The female mosquito lays her eggs in water containers in and around the homes, and other dwellings. These eggs will develop, become larvae, and further develop into adults in about 10 days.

How can the mosquitoes be controlled ?

Dengue mosquitoes breed in stored, exposed water collections. Favoured places for breeding are barrels, drums, jars, pots, buckets, flower vases, plant saucers, tanks, discarded bottles, tins, tyres, water coolers etc. To prevent the mosquitoes from multiplying, drain out the water from desert coolers/window air coolers (when not in use), tanks, barrels, drums, buckets etc. Remove all objects containing water (e.g. plant saucers etc.) from the house. Collect and destroy discarded containers in which water collects e.g. bottles, plastic bags, tins, used tyres etc. In case it is not possible to drain out various water collections or to fully cover them, use TEMEPHOS, an insecticide, (brand name Abate) 1 part per million to prevent larvae from developing into adults.

How can I prevent mosquito bites to prevent dengue?

Dengue mosquitoes bite during the day time throughout the day. Highest biting intensity is about two hours after sunrise and before sunset. Wear full sleeves clothes and long dresses to cover as much of your body as possible. Use repellents- be careful in using them in young children and old people. Use mosquito coils and electric vapour mats during the daytime also to prevent dengue. Use mosquito nets to protect children, old people and others who may rest during the day. The effectiveness of these nets can be improved by treating them with permethrin (pyrethroid insecticide).

Is there any advice for the patient with dengue fever to prevent the spread of the disease to others.

The spread of dengue from a patient to others is possible. The patient should be protected from contact with the mosquito. This can be achieved by ensuring that the patient sleeps under a bed-net. Effective mosquito repellents are used where the patient is being provided care. This will prevent the mosquito from biting the patient and from getting infected and spreading it to others.

What should the doctors treating dengue do ?

Patients suspected to be suffering from dengue haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome should be admitted to a hospital without delay. The progress of these patients should be monitored regularly at 1-2 hours interval. Platelet counts and haematocrits should be monitored repeatedly to review the progress of patients. If the haematocrit levels fall dangerously then a blood transfusion should be considered. A fall of more than 20 % as compared to previous levels may be an indication for transfusion. If the haematocrit values rise the patient should be given fluids intravenously and the fluids carefully monitored to ensure that the patient does not get excess fluids. A rise of more than 20 % as compared to previous levels may be an indication for IV fluids. The doctor would decide based on best judgement of patient's condition.

What medication should be avoided in dengue ?

Do not take aspirin and ibuprofen or any other medicine that reduces the platelets or increases the tendency to bleed. Avoid giving IV fluids unless the patient is bleeding or the haematocrit level is rising progressively. *Avoid rushing into giving blood transfusion* unless the haematocrit is falling dangerously. Do not give platelet transfusion unless the platelet count is very low or unless there is bleeding.

What can the society do to prevent dengue?

The main strategy in the prevention and control of dengue is "source reduction", or prevention of breeding places. Community participation is the key to dengue prevention. Prevention of dengue relies heavily on preventing the mosquito breeding inside and in the vicinity of our homes. Every household should undertake simple measures to prevent water collections from becoming places for mosquito breeding by draining out water, by regular changing of water, cleaning flower vases and other water holding items or, in the case of unused items, by discarding/destroying them. The mosquito does not travel far, therefore "every house cleaning" will ensure that no breeding places exist, preventing dengue from occurring.

