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Dengue is prevalent in most of the parts of our country during this phase of climate.

What is Dengue Fever?

Dengue fever is a disease caused by mosquitoes infected by the dengue virus and is prevalent in the tropical regions of the world. It is a painful, disabling disease, with the severity of pain similar to that of bones breaking - hence it is also known as 'Breakbone' fever.

Dengue fever affects close to 400 million people worldwide each year, with about 40% of the world's population being at risk of exposure and infection. Since dengue fever is caused by a virus, it cannot be cured by antibiotics.

What are the Symptoms of Dengue Fever?

The major symptoms of dengue fever include sudden high fever (as high as 40 °C or 104 °F), chills, severe headache (usually behind the eyes), muscle ache and joint pain, nausea, vomiting, flushed skin and in some cases, a skin rash similar to measles. Dengue fever symptoms may be mild initially and mistaken for a flu,

cold or a viral infection. In rare cases, dengue fever may develop into a more life threatening form known as dengue hemorrhagic fever, which results in bleeding, decreased blood platelet count or thrombocytopenia, blood plasma leakage or the more fatal dengue shock syndrome, which causes dangerously low blood pressure.

What are the Complications of Dengue Fever?

Dengue fever may sometimes develop into more dangerous forms such as dengue hemorrhagic fever or dengue shock syndrome, which may lead to the development of life-threatening symptoms. Some of the complications caused by the disease include:

- Severe dehydration
- Continuous bleeding
- Low platelets, due to which clotting of blood doesn't occur
- Blood pressure may go dangerously low
- Bradycardia (heart beating less than 60 counts per minute)
- Damage to the brain due to bleeding, seizures or encephalitis
- Damage to the immune system
- Enlargement of liver and liver damage

How Do You Diagnose Dengue Fever?

Diagnosis of dengue is considered when sudden high fever is accompanied by severe body, muscle or joint pain. It is important to be evaluated when a person develops fever within two weeks of being in the tropics or sub-tropics. Dengue often causes symptoms that are similar to other diseases such as flu, measles, and typhoid fever etc. Hence investigations are always performed to exclude other disease conditions. Usually, the blood of the patient is tested for the

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presence of antibodies and virus. Diagnosis of dengue infection can be done by the following methods:

- Isolating the virus by collecting serum sample from patients within 5 days of appearance of symptoms.
- Detection of specific antibodies can be done by collecting serum within 6 days after onset of symptoms. The serum is tested for specific anti-dengue antibodies by Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA). Titres of IgM and IgG antibodies increase four-fold in serum sample.
- Using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for detecting viral genomic sequence from Serum or Cerebro Spinal Fluid (CSF) samples collected from the patient, which is more expensive and complicated.

In the case of more serious complications such as dengue hemorrhagic fever, the following diagnosis must be performed:

- A tourniquet test is to be conducted, where a tourniquet is tied to the arm and if blood blotches tend to appear beyond the tourniquet, the patient may be suffering from increased bleeding, which may indicate dengue hemorrhagic fever
- A decrease in platelet count, also known as thrombocytopenia occurs when platelet count falls below 100,000. Normal platelet counts are between 150,000 to 400,000. A decreased platelet count may be due to dengue fever.
- An increase in hematocrit i.e., the volume percentage of red blood cells (RBCs), by 20% could be another indicator as it occurs due to a rise in the vascular permeability of the plasma. Signs of plasma leakage appear as increased fluid accumulation in the chest and abdominal

cavity known as pleural effusion or ascites respectively.

How Do You Prevent Dengue Fever?

Following certain basic steps is really the most effective way to prevent and fight dengue. Since the only way to get dengue is from a mosquito bite, the best way to prevent it is to avoid mosquitoes and prevent from mosquito bites. This is particularly important if a dengue epidemic is underway in your city or town. Some ways to prevent dengue are described below:

- Mosquito breeds in stagnant water. Hence it is advisable to avoid stagnant water and pools on the ground, in flowerpots, buckets, barrels etc., in and around the neighborhood and the house. Water should always be stored in closed containers. Stagnant pools of water on the floor should be mopped up.
- Bleaching powder may be used in water sources that are not meant for drinking, as it will prevent the development of mosquito eggs.
- Avoid being bitten by the mosquitoes in the first place. Mosquitoes bite us as they require the protein present in human blood to produce eggs. To prevent being bitten, keep mosquitoes away by using mosquito repellents, mosquito repellent plants whether indoors or outdoors.
- To avoid mosquitoes, it is best to live inside a well screened or air conditioned house. If this is not possible, mosquito nets should be attached to all windows.
- Another way to prevent mosquito bites is to wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, socks, and shoes or boots when spending time outdoors.
- Mosquitoes are more active at dawn, dusk or early evening. It is therefore advisable to avoid being outdoors during these times to decrease the chances of being bitten by a dengue carrying mosquito.

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- Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colored clothing, therefore it is better to wear bright and light colored clothes.
- Avoid strong perfumes or scented body lotions, as mosquitoes are drawn to strong odors.

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Treatment of Dengue with homeopathic medicines:

In order to treat the dengue patients, we have to consider the symptoms of the patients, as we do to treat any other disease(s). What I have found successful and efficient homeopathy medicines are: Gelsemium, Pulsatilla, Rhus tox, Bryonia and Arsenic alb. All the medicines in their lower potencies with frequent dosage.

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