

10 June 2013

Dear Valued Clients

## Advisory on **dengue fever** in Singapore

### What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne infection usually found in tropical countries, such as Singapore. Specifically, it is transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes. There are 4 different serotypes ("strains") of dengue virus and recovery from one provides lifelong immunity against that particular serotype only, hence, it is still possible to get further dengue infections from other strains. Subsequent infections by other serotypes increase the risk of developing severe dengue.



### What is the current situation?

As of 9th June 2013, there are a total of 9,139 confirmed dengue cases in Singapore this year, of which DEN-1 is the predominant strain. As this was not the predominant strain in the previous years, most of the population does not have immunity to this current active strain, hence the increase in number of infections this year as compared to previous years.

We also expect the numbers to be on the rise in the coming hotter, more humid months, as the breeding times for the *Aedes* mosquitoes in such conditions are much faster.



## What are the symptoms?

Dengue often presents as a high fever 40°C accompanied by 2 of the following symptoms:

- Severe headache
- Pain behind the eyes
- Muscle and joint pains
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Swollen glands
- Rash



Symptoms usually last for 2-7 days, after an incubation period of 4-10 days

Warning signs of severe dengue include:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Persistent vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Bleeding gums or easy bruising
- Fatigue
- Restlessness



If the above occur, please seek medical attention as soon as possible.



### How do we diagnose dengue fever?

Have a high index of suspicion when you have persistent fever for more than 48 hours.

See a doctor, who will then perform blood tests to confirm the diagnosis and assess the severity and risk of complications.

### What can we do to protect ourselves?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against dengue fever.

Treatment of dengue is usually supportive, with regular monitoring of patient's blood counts, adequate hydration and paracetamol to control fever.

If signs of severe dengue occur, treatment and hospitalisation at a tertiary healthcare institution may sometimes be required.

Avoid painkillers like Brufen, Ponstan, etc to treat bodyaches and fever as they can cause gastric issues which may worsen in the presence of dengue.

Prevention is always better than cure. In the control of dengue, vector control and use of insect repellents will be most important.



## Vector control

Do the 10 minute "5 step Mozzie Wipeout"

1. Change water in vases and bowls on alternate days
2. Remove water from flower pot plates on alternate days
3. Turn over all water storage containers
4. Cover bamboo pole holders when not in use
5. Clear blockages and put BTI insecticide in roof gutters monthly



*Courtesy of National Environment Agency*

## Repellent

- Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label.) when necessary. **Do not use repellents under clothing.**
- **Never use repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.**
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using sprays, do not spray directly on face spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Do not allow children to handle the product. When using on children, apply to your own hands first and then put it on the child. You may not want to apply to children's hands.
- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing. Heavy application and saturation are generally unnecessary for effectiveness. If biting insects do not respond to a thin film of repellent, then apply a bit more.
- If you or your child gets a rash or other bad reaction from an insect repellent, stop using the repellent, wash the repellent off with mild soap and water. You may wish to consult a doctor, take the repellent with you to show the doctor.

