

Resource Article

Malaria, Dengue, and Zika

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Many diseases are spread when an infected mosquito bites someone. This article talks about 3 of them: malaria, dengue fever, and the Zika virus.

Preventing Malaria, Dengue, and Zika

These diseases can be prevented! So take these steps to prevent you or your children from catching these diseases.

- Many mosquitoes bite at night, so always sleep under treated mosquito nets. These nets are treated with chemicals that kill mosquitoes, preventing mosquito bites. Some nets can last up to 3 years before they need to be replaced.
- Mosquitoes breed in wet areas, so get rid of any standing water around your building. Get rid of trash and anything that collects water. Make your drainage better so water does not collect and stand.
- Spray the inside of your building with insecticides. This kills mosquitoes and helps prevent the spread of these diseases.
- Before a child becomes sick, find out what help is available in your area.

Malaria

Malaria is a dangerous disease that is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Malaria can be prevented and treated. The people most at risk of getting malaria are young children, pregnant women, people living with HIV, and travelers to areas where malaria is common.

Many of the early symptoms of malaria are common to several diseases. These include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting

If not treated the right away, infected people may get much sicker. They tire easily, they have a hard time breathing, and they may become confused. Many people die of severe malaria.

Children with malaria must be diagnosed and treated promptly. Any child with a high fever who lives in a malaria area may have malaria. If possible, you should have a lab test done to be sure a child has malaria before you begin malaria treatment.

Dengue

Dengue is transmitted by mosquitoes. There is no vaccine available, and there are no medicines to treat it. Therefore, prevention is important. Dengue can be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites. If you are infected, get immediate treatment to lower the risk of medical complications and death. The symptoms of dengue are a high fever with at least 2 of the following:

- Severe headache
- Muscle and/or bone pain
- Rash
- Severe pain behind the eyes
- Joint pain
- Low white blood cell count
- Easily bruising
- Mild bleeding from the nose or gums

If you think you have dengue, use pain relievers with acetaminophen to manage the pain. Avoid medicines containing ibuprofen and aspirin. You should also rest, drink plenty of liquids, and see a doctor. Go immediately to the closest healthcare provider if you experience any of the following signs:

- Severe stomach pain or continual vomiting
- Red spots or patches on the skin
- Severe bleeding from nose or gums
- Vomiting blood
- Black, tarry feces
- Drowsiness or irritability
- Pale, cold, or clammy skin

Zika

Zika is a new disease that is spread primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. The illness is usually mild, many people have no symptoms or only mild ones.

Zika can also be transmitted through sex, from a pregnant woman to her baby, and possibly through blood transfusions.

The most common symptoms of Zika are:

- Fever
- Rash
- Headache
- Joint pain
- Red eyes
- Muscle pain

Symptoms can last for several days to a week. People with Zika usually do not get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die from the disease. People who have been infected with Zika are likely to be protected from future infections.

The Zika virus is dangerous for pregnant women, as their babies can be born with severe brain defects that cause life-long problems.