

DENGUE HAEMORRHAGIC FEVER

If a person suspects that he has contracted the Dengue Haemorrhagic fever he should not take aspirin or any other medicine containing aspirin, as such medicine may increase bleeding from the body.

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Dengue Haemorrhagic fever is one of the most serious diseases affecting children. It is a viral disease transmitted by two types of mosquitos i.e. *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. There is no effective medicine or vaccine available at present for the prevention or the treatment of this disease. Therefore, the control of mosquitos which transmit this virus remains the only effective measure to combat this disease.

A characteristic feature of Dengue Hemorrhagic fever is the large number of persons affected and accordingly the high rate of mortality.

Clean water is the breeding ground for mosquitos who spread this virus. Rain water collected in empty cans, pots, coconut shells, tyres, flower pots and small water containers kept to prevent ants getting on to the tables form the best breeding ground for them. Therefore, efficient disposal of empty containers is the best method to control the breeding of mosquitos.

The highest number is reported from the urban areas. Of the total number of patients affected by this disease, 167 patients were from Colombo while, the others were from the suburbs. About 40-50 children died of Dengue Haemorrhagic fever in 1980, but the number of patients has shown an increase during the past two years. Upto November 1990, 1132 persons were suspected to have contracted the disease out of which 360 were positive cases. Out of the 61 deaths reported the majority were children.

The number of patients in 1991 is as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May
Suspected cases	52	35	39	47	97
Number of deaths	3	4	1	1	4
Positive cases	14	9	7	20	17

Source : Health Education Bureau.

This table indicates that the number of patients are on the increase. Dengue Haemorrhagic fever has also been reported from other countries in the world. It started spreading in Philippines in 1954 and was introduced to Thailand after 1958, thereafter it began spreading to other countries. This disease is prevented mostly in the African countries. In Thailand, there are special wards for the treatment of patients affected by this disease. It has been estimated that, each year about 20,000-40,000 patients seek hospital treatment in Thailand. According to the surveys conducted in Sri Lanka researchers in the Medical Research Institutes believe that this disease was introduced to Sri Lanka by the neighbouring countries.

The disease starts spreading as a common fever. Mostly small children are affected by this disease which starts with a cold and fever or a cough. Head ache and body pain are other symptoms of the disease. The patient may suffer from heavy fever for about 3 days. During this period, a patient may bleed from the nose, gums, eyes or under the skin. The patient's condition can become critical at this stage as his blood pressure may fall due to bleeding.

Following measures could be observed with regard to a patient affected by Dengue Haemorrhagic fever: The patient should take complete rest, if possible he should stay in bed with the first symptoms. Seek medical advice if the fever continues for more than 3 days. Admit the patient to a hospital before he is critically ill due to bleeding. To prevent the spread of the disease through mosquitos, protect the patient from mosquito bites. Mosquitos which transmit the disease are found mostly in open places during the evening, hence to refrain from going to such places, at such time.