

Mosquito-borne diseases

Diseases that spread through mosquito bites are called mosquito-borne diseases. Mosquitoes can pick up germs from biting infected animals or infected humans, but in Australia most mosquitoes do not carry disease-causing germs.

The mosquito-borne diseases reported most often in Australia are Ross River virus infection, Barmah Forest virus infection, dengue fever (in northern Queensland and the Torres Strait) and malaria (usually in people who have travelled overseas). Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Japanese encephalitis, Murray Valley encephalitis, Kunjin (West Nile) virus and Chikungunya virus are very rare.

Mosquito-borne diseases cause various symptoms, which often include fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, and rash. Some can have rare but serious complications. For details on individual diseases, see healthdirect (healthdirect.gov.au/mosquito-borne-diseases).

How it spreads

Mosquito-borne diseases are not spread directly from person to person. The mosquito picks up the virus from an infected person or animal and then spreads it when it feeds on another person or animal.

Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with mosquito-borne viruses can attend the service.

Actions for educators and other staff

Contact your public health unit for advice if you have a mosquito-borne disease in your service.

If in a mosquito-prone area, check with parents if they would like staff to apply insect repellents on their child. Insect repellents containing picaridin, diethyl toluamide (DEET), or oil of lemon eucalyptus (also known as PMD; p-menthane-3,8 diol) are recommended. When using insect repellents on infants and young children, always read the label and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Ensure insect screens are in good condition, with no holes. If you have rainwater tanks, put a screen with holes of less than 1 millimetre over inlets and overflow outlets.

To stop mosquitoes breeding:

- remove any standing water or water-holding containers, or empty and wipe out the container
- empty outside pot plant trays at least once a week, or put sand in the trays to take up the water.

Actions for parents and carers

Keep your child indoors when mosquito bites are most likely to happen. Some mosquitoes will bite during the day, but many are most active for 2 to 3 hours around sunset and sunrise.

When using insect repellents on infants and young children, always read the label and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Insect repellents containing picaridin, diethyl toluamide (DEET), or oil of lemon eucalyptus (also known as PMD; p-menthane-3,8 diol) are recommended.

Make sure insect screens are in good condition, with no holes.

In highly mosquito-prone areas or when mosquitoes are most active, dress your child in long-sleeved, loose, light-coloured clothing that covers as much of the body as possible. Mosquitoes can bite through tight clothing.

Remove any objects that can hold water, such as old tyres or troughs – mosquitoes breed in still water.

Empty pot plant trays at least once a week or put sand in the trays to take up the water.

Keep fish, such as small native fish, in fishponds or unused swimming pools to eat the baby mosquitoes before they turn into adults.

Empty paddling pools each day as soon as children have finished playing in them.

Empty birdbaths and pets' water bowls at least once a week.

If you have rainwater tanks, put a screen with holes of less than 1 millimetre over inlets and overflow outlets.

More information about mosquito-borne diseases

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of mosquito-borne diseases (healthdirect.gov.au/mosquito-borne-diseases).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.