

Notes on Dengue Fever  
by Atenas Today staff reporter

Recently my friend and great information source, Marietta Arce, sent me an article about dengue fever. She reminded me that with the rainy season approaching, the dengue mosquitoes are coming. Last year there were many cases in Atenas.

Here are some notes I got from her article and from some internet research.

1. Dengue fever is a viral, flu-like disease transmitted from human to human by the bite of a particular type of mosquito, called the *Aedes aegypti*.
2. The *Aedes* mosquito can be recognized by the black and white stripes on its legs and abdomen.
3. The *Aedes* lives and breeds in urban areas in water filled manmade containers, such as old flower pots. Old tires are especially bad.
4. The *Aedes* likes lower altitudes; it is very rare above 4,000 feet.
5. The *Aedes* bites people only in the daytime; it is not active at night.
6. The average time between the bite of an infected *Aedes* and the onset of symptoms is 4 to 6 days, with a range of 3 to 14 days.
7. An infected person cannot spread the infection to other people, but can be a source of the virus for other mosquitoes for about 6 days.
8. Dengue fever usually starts suddenly with a high fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, and pain in the muscles and joints.
9. A rash usually appears 3 to 4 days after the start of the fever.
10. Nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite are common.
11. The presence of the dengue virus can be detected by a simple blood test.
12. The severe portion of the illness usually lasts a week to ten days, but complete recovery can take a month.
13. The only treatment is rest, plenty of fluids, and acetaminophen (avoid aspirin).
14. If there are no complications, there are no long term effects from the disease.
15. The most dangerous complication is a progression to dengue hemorrhagic fever. People who have already had dengue fever and are infected again are more susceptible to this complication.
16. Dengue hemorrhagic fever causes the blood vessels to start to leak, resulting in bleeding from the nose, mouth, and gums. Bruising can be a sign of internal bleeding.
17. Dengue hemorrhagic fever is potentially fatal and must be treated promptly after the first symptoms by replacing lost fluids, and sometimes having blood transfusions.
18. Dengue hemorrhagic fever is fatal in about 5 percent of cases, usually among children and young adults.
19. There is no vaccine to protect against this virus. The only way to avoid the possibility of contracting the illness is to avoid being bitten by an infected *Aedes* mosquito.

20. Insect repellent should contain at least 30% DEET to be effective. Strong repellent like this should not be inhaled or put on the hands of children, where it could find its way to their mouths.
21. Mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing, so apply repellent to clothing as well as to exposed skin.
22. There are likely to be many more infected mosquitoes in the downtown Atenas area than in the outlying areas. If you live in Atenas centro you should have screens and eliminate all potential breeding sites around your property.