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Healthy Children Brighter Tomorrows

Little lives. Big tomorrows.

Dengue Fever in Children

A simple guide for parents: signs, symptoms, home care, and when hospital care may be needed.



Most children with dengue recover well with careful monitoring, good fluids, and timely review.
The most important things are how the child is drinking, urinating, behaving, and whether warning signs appear.

1 What is dengue?

Dengue is a viral infection spread by the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes (usually Aedes aegypti). It can cause fever and a range of symptoms in children.

It **does not spread** directly from one child to another (e.g. by touching, coughing or sharing food).

How dengue spreads



2 Common signs and symptoms

Children can have different symptoms. Some children may also have abdominal discomfort.



High fever
Usually sudden onset and may last 2–7 days.



Headache
Can be moderate to severe.



Pain behind the eyes
Often worse with eye movement.



Body aches / joint pains
Can make the child feel very uncomfortable.



Nausea or vomiting
May be mild or severe.



Poor appetite
Not interested in food or milk.



Rash
A red, blotchy rash may appear on the skin (usually around day 3–5).



Tiredness / weakness
Child may seem very tired and less active than usual.

3 The three phases of dengue

Important: when the fever comes down, the danger is not always over.



1. Febrile phase

- Fever (often high)
- Body pain and headache
- Child looks and feels ill

Usually lasts 2–7 days



2. Critical phase

- Often begins around the time the fever settles
- Warning signs may appear over the next 24–48 hours
- Close monitoring is important

Usually day 3–6



3. Recovery phase

- Fever gone
- Appetite and activity improve
- Fluids in the body rebalance

Usually from day 7 onwards

Parent note: Dengue severity is judged by the child's condition, hydration, circulation, and warning signs — not by fever alone.

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Home Care for Mild Dengue

What parents can do safely at home when the child is stable and warning signs are absent.



1 Most children can be managed at home if...

- The child is drinking reasonably well.
- The child is passing urine (pees).
- The child is alert or improving (like playing, talking, more active).
- The child has no warning signs of severe dengue.
- The child can be reviewed by a doctor if needed.

Most children with dengue get better with simple home care and close monitoring.

2 What to do at home

- Give plenty of oral fluids: ORS, water, coconut water, soups, breastfeeds, milk or usual fluids.
- Encourage small frequent sips.
- Use paracetamol only, as advised, for fever or discomfort.
- Let the child rest.
- Monitor urine output, activity, vomiting, and how the child is drinking.
- Continue follow-up / CBC / hematocrit checks if advised by your doctor.

3 What to avoid

- Avoid ibuprofen, aspirin, and diclofenac / routine NSAIDs.
- Avoid unnecessary antibiotics unless the doctor thinks there is a bacterial infection.
- Avoid ignoring poor drinking or reduced urine.
- Avoid panic over the platelet count alone.

More information is always better than worry. Talk to your doctor.

4 A very important reminder

- **Day 1–3** Fever (usually high)
- **Day 4–5** Fever starting to settle
- **Day 6–7** Watch closely (risk of warning signs)

Warning signs often appear around the time the fever starts settling, especially over the next 24–48 hours.

Keep watching the child carefully even if the temperature falls.

Prevent mosquito bites

- Use mosquito nets and window screens.
- Use full sleeves and long pants, especially in the evening.
- Remove standing water around your home (buckets, pots, old tyres, etc).
- Prevent mosquito bites so the virus is not spread further.

Parent note:

There is no specific medicine that cures dengue. Good fluids, careful observation, and timely medical review make the biggest difference.

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Warning Signs and When Hospital Care Is Needed

This is the most important page for parents: know when to seek urgent medical review.



Seek help early. Your child's health matters.

1 Seek urgent medical help if you notice...

These could be signs of severe dengue. Do not wait. Seek medical care immediately.


Severe abdominal pain or marked abdominal tenderness


Persistent vomiting / vomiting 3 or more times in 24 hours


Bleeding from the nose or gums


Vomiting blood or blood in stools / black stools


Child becomes very sleepy, weak, restless, or unusually irritable


Breathing difficulty


Cold hands and feet, dizziness, faintness, or signs of poor circulation / shock


Very little urine or obvious dehydration

2 Which children are more likely to need admission?

Your child may need hospital care if they have:


Inability to drink or keep fluids down


Dehydration (signs of fluid loss)


Warning signs (as listed above)


Breathing difficulty


Significant bleeding


Very young age (e.g. infants) or poor monitoring at home


Coexisting illnesses (e.g. heart, lung, kidney, immune problems)


Concern about circulation or signs of shock

3 What does hospitalization usually mean?

In hospital, the team will:



Monitor pulse, blood pressure, urine output and hematocrit (when needed)


Give careful fluids according to your child's needs



Repeat blood tests (e.g. complete blood count, hematocrit)


Watch closely for any bleeding or signs of shock


If the child becomes severe, they may need closer monitoring or intensive care

4 Platelets: what parents should know



The number alone does not decide severity. Doctors look at the child's overall condition, hydration, circulation, bleeding, hematocrit trend, and platelet trend together.



Platelet transfusion is **not routinely needed** just because the platelet count is low.

Doctor's Advice for Your Child Today

- ☐ Home care advised
- ☐ Review tomorrow
- ☐ Repeat CBC / hematocrit
- ☐ Hospital observation
- ☐ Admission advised

Next review: _____

Notes: _____

Doctor signature: _____ Date: _____

Most children recover well when warning signs are recognized early and fluids are managed properly.