

16 January 2018

Dengue outbreak in Pacific countries - call for vigilance from health providers

- Increase in dengue and severe dengue cases in Auckland, mostly from Samoa.
- Consider dengue in patients with fever, headache, malaise and recent travel to the Pacific Islands.
- Provide advice to patients planning to travel to the Pacific to avoid mosquito bites.

Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) has seen a large increase in dengue and severe dengue fever cases over the last three months (Chart 1)

For the period 1 November to 15 January 2018, 81 dengue cases have been reported in Auckland, with 63 cases from Samoa, six from Fiji and two from Tonga. Around 69% of all dengue cases notified to ARPHS required hospitalisation.

The Samoa Ministry of Health announced on 9th January 2018 that there have been 2,400 dengue cases and five deaths over the last three months. Fiji has also declared a dengue outbreak with almost 500 cases reported.

Health providers should be vigilant regarding the following:

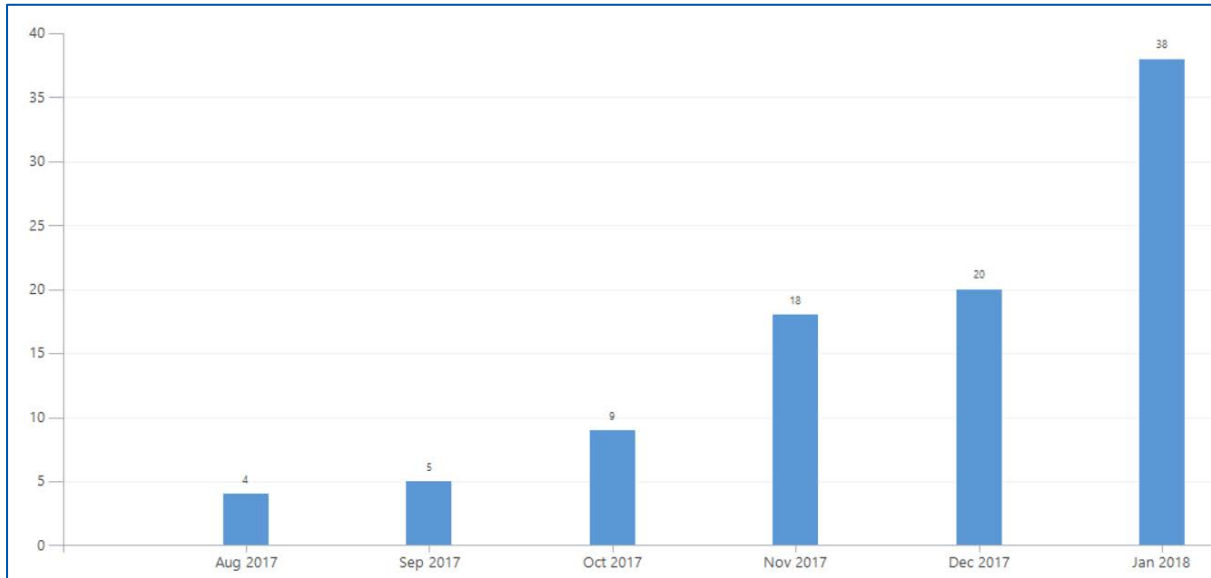
1. **Consider dengue** in patients with fever, intense headache and pain behind the eyes, malaise, and arthralgia, nausea, vomiting or skin rash, **AS WELL AS** a history of recent travel to Samoa, Fiji or other Pacific Island country.
2. **Severe dengue** can quickly become a medical emergency and should be considered if patients also present with early signs of shock, or bleeding from the nose and gums, petechiae, and signs of internal bleeding e.g. vomiting blood, passing blood in the stool or urine, abdominal pain and distension, respiratory distress, or other signs of organ failure.
3. **Request a blood test for the 'mosquito-borne virus panel'** (the preferred test) **on suspicion** and **notify ARPHS** on (09) 6234600. Other tests for dengue infection such as NS1 and serology (IgG/IgM) may be considered if clinically appropriate
4. **Treat fever and headaches** with paracetamol if not allergic or contraindicated. Aspirin or non-steroidal medicines such as ibuprofen, naproxen or diclofenac are not recommended.
5. **Exclusion is not required** as dengue is not spread from person to person. The dengue virus is carried by an infective Aedes mosquito and transmitted to others through biting. The Aedes mosquito is not present in New Zealand.
6. **Recommend** measures for all patients to avoid mosquito bites when travelling to Pacific Island countries over the summer.

Resource for patients:

At the end of this document is a flyer for you to distribute to those patients visiting friends or relatives in the Pacific Islands. It is also available [here](#).

For more information on dengue, visit the ARPHS website www.arphs.govt.nz.

Chart 1: Number of dengue cases notified to ARPHS for the period 01 August 2017 to 15 January 2018 by month.





How to avoid diseases spread by mosquitoes while in the Pacific

Getting bitten by mosquitoes is common in the Pacific and elsewhere in the tropics. **But some mosquitoes can carry serious diseases.**

There's been a rise in the number of people with dengue in Auckland, caught when visiting the Pacific.

Frequent travellers to the Pacific are at even greater risk. If you have had dengue previously, you can develop severe dengue (also called dengue haemorrhagic fever) if you are infected with a different strain of the dengue virus.

Although the most common time for mosquito bites is early morning and late afternoon, dengue-carrying mosquitoes bite all through the day.

Take precautions to avoid being bitten.

Indoors

Use screens on doors and windows.

Use insect sprays.

Use mosquito coils.

Use a mosquito net over your bed at night. New bed nets often have insecticide already on the net, but if not you can spray the net with insecticide.

Turn on air conditioning if you have it and close all windows and doors – this is very effective at keeping mosquitoes out of a room.

Outdoors

Wear an insect repellent cream or spray containing less than 35% diethyltoluamide (DEET).

High concentrations are no more effective and can be harmful. Products containing 20–25% picaridin or 30% lemon eucalyptus oil can also be used.

When using sunscreen, apply repellent over the top of sunscreen.

Wear light coloured protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants and hats. Clothing can be treated with repellent.

Use zip-up screens on tents.

Avoid places where mosquitoes are most active, such as swampy areas.