

# Staying Healthy

## Public Health in the Tropics

It is important that employees are aware of the hazards in their workplaces and the controls required to minimise risk. The Department has infection control protocols that are common to all workplaces; however, in tropical parts of the state there are public health issues that may impact on people working and living in these locations.

In addition to general information regarding infectious disease awareness, all departmental employees currently in these locations and those scheduled to work in these areas in the future should be aware of the following:

### Mosquito-borne Diseases

Mosquitoes can act as transmitters of diseases as the adult female seeks out repeated blood meals to mature successive egg batches throughout her life. Hence they feed from person to person and/or animal to person.

The Queensland Department of Health advise that the most common mosquito-borne diseases in Queensland are Dengue, Ross River Virus and Barmah Forest Virus.

While some mosquito-borne diseases are locally acquired in Queensland, others are imported to Queensland when people acquire the disease travelling overseas and return unwell.

Disease	Prevention options	Location	Queensland cases / Incidences
<a href="#">Dengue</a>	Avoid mosquito bites.	Found in most tropical areas of the world, outbreaks occur in North Queensland.	Outbreaks can occur each year.
<a href="#">Ross River virus</a>	Avoid mosquito bites.	Occurs widely in Queensland and Australia.	Around 2000 cases are reported throughout the year with most between February and May. Occasionally larger outbreaks occur.
<a href="#">Barmah Forest virus</a>	Avoid mosquito bites.	Occurs widely in Queensland and Australia.	There are over 400 cases of Barmah Forest virus reported in Queensland each year.
<a href="#">Japanese Encephalitis</a>	Japanese encephalitis vaccination. If not vaccinated, avoid mosquito bites.	A small number of cases have previously occurred in Torres Strait and Cape York.	Cases are rare in Australia, however vaccination is recommended for people (>1 year of age) residing on the outer islands of Torres Strait or visiting for 30 days or more during the wet season (December to May).

**Source:** Content From Queensland Government – Department of Health



## How to protect yourself

**Note:** Cases of mosquito-borne diseases in DoE staff are extremely rare. Follow local public health advice to ensure protection.

### 1. Avoid mosquito bites

Protect yourself against mosquito bites. Not only are they irritating, mosquito bites can also spread disease.

Different types of disease-carrying mosquitoes can bite at different times of the day, so it's important to be vigilant at all times.

- Use insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin, particularly during daylight hours when the dengue mosquito is most active.
  - Read and follow all directions and precautions on mosquito repellent product labels, especially for infants.
- Wear long, loose clothing to help protect yourself from bites (light coloured clothes are best).
- Use a plug-in insecticide vaporiser (indoors) or mosquito coils (outdoors) if appropriate.
- Use a mosquito net over beds (when there is no air conditioning or screens).
- Ensure insect screens on all doors and windows, especially in sleeping areas are intact.

### 2. Reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home

Simple, preventive action can be taken in and around the home to kill the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The mosquito is often found in dark areas around your home such as under beds and other furniture.

- Remove potential mosquito breeding sites. Some mosquitos lay their eggs in containers found in domestic environments — near humans — so extra care needs to be taken to remove breeding sites around the home.
- Keep your lawns mowed.
- DIY spraying your home
  - Please use residual surface spray according to the manufacturer's directions. These sprays last a minimum of six weeks. If you have a respiratory condition or sensitivity you should have somebody else do the spraying for you, or alternatively seek advice from your doctor before commencing spraying.

### 3. Vaccination - Japanese Encephalitis (JE) if necessary

Immunisation plays an important role in protecting against JE. Two JE vaccines, each with different characteristics, are available for use in Australia.

- *Imojev* is registered for use in children  $\geq 12$  months and adults in a single dose.
- *JEspec* is registered for use in individuals aged  $\geq 18$  years and is a two dose schedule, given 28 days apart.

The vaccine can be given in pregnancy, if necessary.

Contact the **Tropical Public Health Services Cairns** on **(07) 4226 5555** if you have any additional enquiries

#### Further Information

Infection Control Procedure:

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/corp/hr/workplace/Pages/Infection-Control.aspx>

Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultants: <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing/workplaces/contacts>

Time Out Poster – Qld Dept. of Health:

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/timeout\\_poster.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/timeout_poster.pdf)

Queensland Health - Occupational Immunisations:

<http://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/immunisation/occupational/index.html>

Department of Health:

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/topics/infection-control/default.asp>

