



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH,
WELLNESS AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

**Ministerial Building, Kingstown,
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Permanent Secretary
Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

DENGUE OUTBREAK – UPDATE 20/10/2020

The Surveillance Committee of the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE) has recorded 1155 laboratory confirmed cases of dengue fever as of October 14. The mosquito borne disease continues to affect all health districts, but most cases have been reported as occurring in persons who live in the Kingstown, Georgetown and Pembroke Health Districts. Persons in the 0-15-year-old age group account for the majority of cases, with an attack rate of 2.6% in the 5-14-year age group.

The Surveillance Committee of the (MOHWE) advises that a thirty-seven (37) year old female, from the Marriaqua Health District, who was admitted on Sunday October 11 and died on Thursday October 15, tested positive for, but did not die from dengue fever as determined by postmortem. To date, six (6) persons have died as a direct result of dengue fever.

The Hospital Services and Pharmacy Services Programmes of the (MOHWE) are working in close collaboration with the PAHO Eastern Caribbean Countries Office in Barbados to support the care and treatment of all patients with Dengue Fever, with a focus on critically ill patients with Severe Dengue Fever. This support includes the procurement of specialized equipment and medications to increase our capacity to care for patients who become severely ill with Dengue Fever. The most recent example of this collaborative support was the procurement and delivery on Monday October 12, of forty (40) vials of medication for a patient who has developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome. The MOHWE Pharmaceutical Services was able to provide the initial dosages of this critical treatment until the additional dosages arrived in St. Vincent. CARPHA also continues to provide technical support for the implementation of the Integrated Vector Control Programme and the management of persons who develop Dengue Fever.

The Clinical Care Team of the MOHWE is continuously striving to provide the best possible treatment for persons who develop complications of Severe Dengue Fever. The current outbreak of Dengue Fever in SVG is complicated because of the very severe inflammatory reaction many patients develop, when they become infected with the dengue virus (type 3) currently circulating in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This extreme reaction is due to the fact that there are many persons who have been previously exposed to different strains of the Dengue virus and the related Zika virus. These previous exposures have been found to increase the probability of Vincentians developing severe disease caused by the Antibody Dependent Enhancement phenomenon. Similar experiences with severe disease have been reported in other CARICOM member states during this dengue outbreak cycle which started in 2018.

The Vector Control Unit of the Environmental Health Department of the (MOHWE) continues to ramp up the Integrated Vector Control (IVC) Strategy to reduce the mosquito populations through the deployment of district teams focused on source reduction, including fogging. Health Promotion activities, also part of the IVC Strategy, will continue with the engagement of communities, churches and other non-governmental organizations.



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The fight against Dengue Fever is a shared responsibility. The public is therefore urged to continue to work with the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment to reduce the risk of persons being infected with Dengue Fever by reducing their exposure to the mosquito which causes dengue by:

1. Reducing the breeding of the mosquito by discarding improperly stored water or covering properly collected water.
2. Reducing rubbish and overgrown bush.
3. Wearing light colored clothes with long pants and long sleeves.
4. Using insect repellents and mosquito nets to prevent mosquito bite. These actions are important to prevent further spread both to those who have not had dengue fever, and also those with dengue fever.
5. Opening homes to allow increased effectiveness of fogging by the Vector control unit.

Symptoms of Dengue Fever include fever, headache with pain behind the eyes, a rash, abdominal pain, vomiting and bleeding. Home treatments for dengue fever should focus on reducing the fever by using cool not cold baths, acetaminophen (paracetamol) not ibuprofen and maintaining hydration by drinking lots of fluids such as coconut water. The early and consistent use of Papaya leaf extract for five days in persons with dengue fever symptoms, is strongly encouraged. Persons with symptoms of Dengue Fever are asked to seek and comply with medical care early to avoid the possible complications of delayed care.

Persons who have previously had dengue fever, zika, or children of mothers who had dengue during their pregnancy, are at increased risk to develop severe dengue fever. These individuals and their guardians are asked to be particularly vigilant for any warning signs of severe dengue.

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