

Dengue fever surges in Singapore; 9,000 sickened

June 11 2013, by Heather Tan

Singapore is telling doctors to be more vigilant against dengue fever as the mosquito-borne disease surges this year.

The Southeast Asian city-state has had more than 9,000 cases and two deaths since January. The illnesses counted so far in 2013 are already twice the total for all of last year.

Singapore's health ministry said in a statement late Monday it has alerted clinics in neighborhoods where dengue cases have spiked and has advised all medical practitioners about the early diagnosis and close monitoring of patients.

Dengue fever, spread by the [Aedes aegypti mosquito](#), is common in Asia and Latin America. Symptoms include [high fever](#), joint pains and nausea, but in severe cases, it can lead to internal bleeding, liver enlargement, circulatory shutdown and death.

Part of the reason for this year's increase is that the [dengue virus](#) seems to be showing more strength and resistance, said Asok Kurup, a doctor at Mount Elizabeth Hospital's infectious diseases care center, who has treated dozens of dengue cases this year.

Officials have urged Singaporeans to take precautions and clear stagnant water where mosquitoes breed, but some residents say the main responsibility lies with the [health care system](#).

"With so many cases occurring, shouldn't the vigilance fall on our doctors instead?" said homemaker Audrey Quek, whose teenage son had dengue two years ago. She said doctor initially mistook his fever and joint pains for [flu symptoms](#), but he survived.

Authorities say they're taking other measures such as increasing insecticide [fumigation](#) and sending officers to inspect locations where mosquitoes might breed. Public awareness campaigns are also being planned, including an online reality show focusing on environmental officers on anti-dengue patrols.

Singapore imposes tough penalties on residents whose homes are found to be mosquito breeding areas. Offenders can be fined and jailed three months.

Singapore's worst dengue outbreak in recent years was in 2005, when nearly 14,000 cases and 25 deaths were reported.

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