

FACT SHEET



Ross River Virus

Ross River virus infection is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. A number of cases are acquired in Tasmania each year, mostly during the summer months when weather is warmer and mosquitoes are more active. Outbreaks can occur when local conditions of rainfall, tides and temperature promote mosquito breeding.

Background

Ross River virus can cause joint inflammation, muscle ache, fatigue, fever, headache and a rash often develops. It is spread by mosquitoes and symptoms may develop between 3 and 21 days after exposure. All people recover but symptoms may linger for a year or more.

Symptoms

- Joint pain, swelling and stiffness—often in wrists, knees, ankles, fingers & toes
- Rash on the body and limbs can appear 1-10 days after the onset of joint pain and can last up to 10 days
- Enlargement of lymph nodes, particularly in groin or armpit
- Fever, headache, muscle aches
- Extreme lethargy

Symptoms can appear from 3 to 21 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Distribution

In Tasmania the coastal regions extending from the North (including the islands of eastern Bass Strait), down the East to the South Eastern corner, all have areas suited to the breeding of mosquitoes that can transmit Ross River virus. Coastal salt marshes provide ideal mosquito breeding sites.



Photo: Wikipedia

Prevention

- Avoid known mosquito infested areas, particularly at dawn and dusk.
- Wear loose fitting, light coloured clothing that covers as much of your body as possible. Mosquitoes can bite through tight fitting clothing.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET or picaridin on exposed areas. Always read the manufacturers instructions before applying it.
- Fit flyscreens properly to windows and external doors.
- Reduce the number of potential mosquito breeding habitats by ensuring no stagnant water is present. Containers holding water should be emptied and washed regularly.

Diagnosis and where to get help

Contact your doctor. Blood tests can confirm if a person has Ross River Virus, but there is no specific treatment. Paracetamol may relieve pain and your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce joint inflammation.