

Ross River virus infection



Ross River virus infection is an illness caused by infection with the Ross River virus, which is related to Barmah Forest virus. It may also be known as Ross River fever.



Ross River virus infection is a notifiable condition¹

How Ross River virus is spread

The infection is spread by mosquitoes from infected animals to humans.

Native animals such as wallabies and kangaroos are thought to be the main animals involved in the cycle of infection.

When a female mosquito feeds on the blood of an infected animal, the mosquito may become infected with the virus. The virus may then be passed on to humans or other animals when the mosquito feeds again.

In large outbreaks mosquitoes may also spread the virus from infected people to other people.

Signs and symptoms

Many people infected with Ross River virus, particularly children, have no symptoms. The severity of symptoms increases with age.

Symptoms vary from person-to-person and may include:

- > fever
- > chills
- > muscle aches
- > rash
- > fatigue
- > aching tendons
- > swollen lymph nodes

> headache, especially behind the eyes

> joint pain, swelling and stiffness.

The most distinctive and distressing feature of Ross River virus infection is usually joint pain. Any joint in the body may be affected, but the most common sites are the wrists, knees, ankles, fingers, elbows, shoulders and jaw. The pain may be more severe in different joints at different times.

In most cases, symptoms disappear within 6 weeks, though some people may still have symptoms after a year or two and the symptoms may come and go. About 10% of people have ongoing depression and fatigue.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by a blood test. Other illnesses with similar symptoms may need to be excluded.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

3 days to 3 weeks, usually 1 to 2 weeks.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

Direct person-to-person spread does not occur.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment for Ross River virus and no vaccine to prevent infection. Paracetamol may be used to treat pain and fever. Aspirin should not be given to children under 12 years of age unless specifically recommended by a doctor.

The Arthritis SA provides a very helpful fact sheet on dealing with the symptoms.

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Prevention

- > Exclusion from childcare, preschool, school or work is not necessary.
- > Self-protection from mosquito bites is the key to prevention.
- > Personal protection and the environmental management of mosquitoes are important in preventing illness.

1 The law requires doctors and laboratories to report some infections or diseases to SA Health. These infections or diseases are commonly referred to as 'notifiable conditions'.

Useful links

Fight the Bite website – www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/fightthebite

> Avoiding mosquito bites

SA Health website – www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

> Barmah Forest virus infection

> Chikungunya virus infection

> Dengue fever

> Japanese encephalitis

> Kunjin/West Nile virus infection

> Malaria

> Murray Valley encephalitis

> When you have a notifiable condition

> Yellow fever

Arthritis SA – www.arthritissa.org.au

You've Got What? 5th Edition

Communicable Disease Control Branch

Telephone: 1300 232 272 Email: HealthCommunicableDiseases@sa.gov.au

The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG* for consumers and the community FEBRUARY 2016.

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