

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

New Covid-19 cases drop by 21.8%

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 14,558 new Covid-19 cases were recorded in the in the 48th Epidemiological Week (ME 48/2022) from Nov 27 to Dec 3, a 21.8% drop from 18,606 cases in the previous week.

Of the total, local cases fell by 21.7% (from 18,581 to 14,543), while the number of imported cases dropped by 40% (from 25 cases to 15).

"The number of deaths in ME 48/2022 increased by 12.7% (from 55 cases to 62)," said the ministry in a statement yesterday.

The infectivity rate was 0.93 nationwide.

The admission of Covid patients to hospitals and low-risk treatment centres per 100,000 population decreased by 26.1% in the same week compared to the previous week.

"Category 1 and 2 patients dropped by 24.6%; while category 3, 4, and 5 patients decreased by 23.5%," the statement read. - Bernama

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RUANGAN : HEALTH

Dengue fever in children

It is important to know and identify dengue symptoms in children at an early stage to ensure proper treatment on time.

BY DR YEAP JO WEARN

DENGUE is a mosquito-borne viral disease spread through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito. It is caused by the dengue virus which has 4 serotypes: DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, and DENV-4. All serotypes can be found in Malaysia. As such, a person may be infected with dengue more than once. After being infected by one serotype, there is lifelong immunity to that particular serotype but not the others.

The vector of the dengue virus, the mosquito, Aedes aegypti, feeds early in the morning and in the evenings. The mosquito breeds easily in urban environments, laying eggs even in small stagnant collections of water. Other than dengue, the mosquito is also responsible for spreading the chikungunya and Zika viruses.

Some of the precautions that may be taken to reduce the chances of being bitten by an infected Aedes mosquito include:

- Using insect screens for doors and windows
- Using insect repellent when outdoors, especially during dawn and dusk
- Regularly changing water in potted plants/pet bowls
- Discarding containers that may collect rainwater
- Ensure drains are not clogged

In many cases, dengue causes non-specific symptoms which may be difficult to differentiate from other febrile illnesses.

There are 3 phases in dengue infection: febrile phase, critical phase, and recovery phase.

Febrile phase

Following an incubation period of 4-10 days after being bitten by the mosquito, the child develops high-grade fever. Other non-specific symptoms commonly found include skin redness over the face and body, muscle aches, headache, pain behind the eyes, pain in the joints, tummy pain, vomiting, and poor appetite.

Some children develop bleeding in the form of gum/nose bleeding, and bright red spots on the skin. They may also develop bruises more easily than usual.



Usually, the symptoms of dengue are mild to moderate in children and can be diagnosed with a blood test.

The earliest abnormality that can be detected in the febrile phase is the gradual drop in white cell counts.

In this phase, some of the complications that may occur include dehydration and febrile seizures.

The febrile phase lasts between 3 to 7 days. Even on the first day of illness, dengue may be tested positive on the rapid combo test kit.

Critical phase

After the febrile phase, the child goes into the critical phase. The temperature drops and remains below 38 degrees. While it may seem like the child is starting to recover, in actual fact, this is the most dangerous phase where complications may occur.

A process named plasma leakage may occur in the critical phase. This is where a protein-rich fluid component of the blood leaks out from the blood vessels into the surrounding tissue.

If significant plasma leakage occurs, the child may develop potentially life-threatening organ impairment.

This phase usually lasts between 24 to 48 hours.

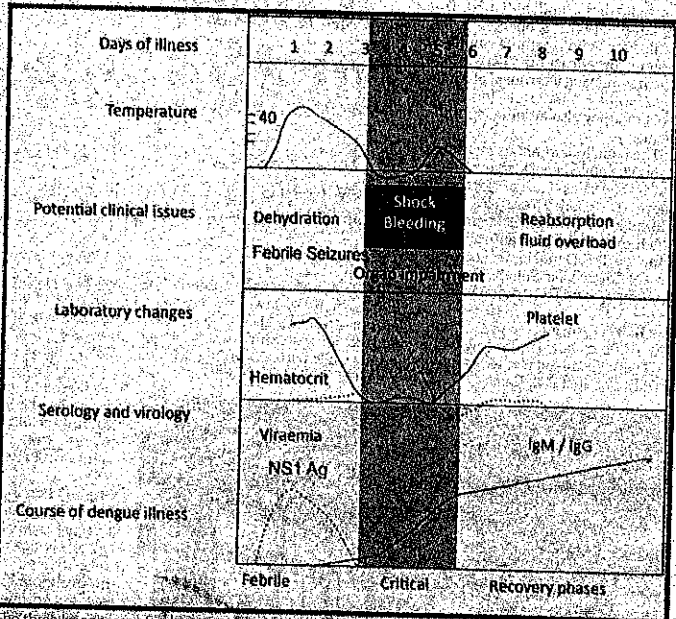
In the hospital setting, blood counts may need to be repeated several times a day, paying close attention particularly to the child's haematocrit levels.

DENGUE FEVER INFOGRAPHIC

SYMPTOMS

- HIGH FEVER
- MUSCLE PAINS
- NECK PAIN
- RASH
- HEADACHE
- THIRST
- VOMITING
- FATIGUE

Sudden high fever, skin rashes, vomiting and dehydration are some of the symptoms of dengue in children.



The three key phases of a dengue infection.

Recovery phase

In the final phase of dengue, the child starts to show a gradual improvement in appetite and other symptoms. Some children may develop a typical reddish rash throughout their body. The previously abnormal blood counts

gradually return to normal values. There is gradual reabsorption of the leaked plasma back into the blood vessels.

Not all children who have dengue will need hospital admission. Some of the criteria for admission include:

- Children below 1-year-old
- Warning signs include severe abdominal pain, vomiting, bleeding, fluid accumulation in the lung or abdomen, or markedly abnormal blood counts.
- Signs of organ impairment
- Other concomitant medical illness

For children who are treated at home, paracetamol may be used for fever and pain but please keep in mind not to exceed the recommended doses.

A category of medications named NSAIDs is not recommended for use in dengue as these may worsen bleeding or abdominal pain.

Children who are treated at home will need daily monitoring and blood count checks until they have recovered from dengue. There are dengue monitoring cards and home care leaflets available from the health clinic. Antibiotics are not usually required for dengue.

All cases tested positive for dengue will be notified to the public health office who may then undertake community action such as fumigation.

Currently, there is no evidence to support the use of any traditional or complementary medicines such as papaya leaf extract in the treatment of dengue.

Dr Yeap is a paediatrician attached to KPJ Sentosa KL. Through his articles, he aims to help increase public awareness of the common issues associated with children's health.

