

Barmah Forest virus infection

What is Barmah Forest virus?

- Barmah Forest virus is a germ that can infect people through mosquito bites.
- Past infection with Barmah Forest virus may have a protective effect against future infection.
- Barmah Forest virus is related to Ross River virus.

How is Barmah Forest virus spread?

- The virus is spread by certain types of female mosquitoes.
- Female mosquitoes feed on animals and people. If they feed on the blood of an infected animal, the mosquito may become infected. The virus may then be passed to other animals or to people when the infected mosquito bites them while it is feeding again.
- Native animals, such as kangaroos and wallabies, are thought to be the main animals involved in the cycle of infection.
- The virus is not spread from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of Barmah Forest virus infection?

- Many people infected with the virus will not develop symptoms.
- Symptoms of Barmah Forest virus infection are similar to that of Ross River virus infection.
- Flu-like symptoms may occur, with fever, chills, headache, and aches in the muscles and joints.
- Some people may develop joint swelling and stiffness, which is particularly noticeable in the mornings.
- A rash sometimes develops, usually on the trunk or limbs. This rash usually disappears after 7-10 days.
- A feeling of tiredness or weakness can occur at times during the illness, which can affect both lifestyle and work performance.

How soon do symptoms develop after being bitten by an infected mosquito?

- Symptoms develop between 5-21 days, but usually between 7-10 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

How long does the illness last?

- The majority of people will recover completely within a few weeks. Others may experience symptoms on and off for more than three months. In very rare cases, people may experience symptoms for over a year.
- A full recovery can be expected.

What is the treatment for Barmah Forest virus infection?

- There is no specific treatment for Barmah Forest virus infection.

- Your doctor will be able to assist you in easing the discomfort of symptoms.
- Plenty of rest, along with moderate exercise and healthy eating, may help in your recovery.

How do I know if I have Barmah Forest virus infection?

If you have symptoms, see your doctor, who can order a blood test to diagnose Barmah Forest virus infection.

Can Barmah Forest virus infection be prevented?

- The key to prevention is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, especially in the summer and autumn months.
- Avoid being outside in the late afternoon and dusk. Mosquitoes are usually most active from 1–3 hours after sunset and again around dawn.
- When outside wear loose fitting, light coloured clothing that covers your arms and legs, and use an insect repellent that contains the chemical diethyl toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin.
- Fit fly screens to all windows, doors, and chimneys (when not in use), and keep them in good repair.
- Use an insecticide in sleeping areas, according to instructions.
- Ensure open containers of water are removed from around the home to prevent mosquitoes breeding. Cover the openings to water tanks with fine steel mesh to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs in the tank.
- When camping, take precautions such as using flyscreens on caravans and tents, and by sleeping under mosquito proof nets.
- Take particular care while fishing, ensuring that you follow personal precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitos.

Further information - Public Health Units in NSW



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