ROSS RIVER FEVER

What is it?
Ross River fever is an illness caused by Ross River virus.

Why does it happen?
You need to be in the wrong place at the wrong time to catch Ross River virus. The infection is spread when a mosquito bites an infected animal than the mosquito bites you.

In large outbreaks, mosquitoes can also spread the virus from infected people to you.

You need that buzzing mosquito to spread it – you cannot catch Ross River fever from person-to-person.

Symptoms
Symptoms can vary from person to person
- Fever with alternating chills
- Headache, especially behind the eyes
- Joint pain, swelling and stiffness. Any joint in the body may be affected, but the most common sites are the wrists, knees, ankles, fingers, elbows, shoulders and jaw
- Muscle soreness
- Rash
- Lethargy
- Swollen lymph nodes.

On average symptoms disappear within 6 weeks, though some people may still have the symptoms on and off for one to two years.

What natural therapies can help?
Zinc and vitamin A and vitamin C are important for proper functioning of the immune system.

Bioflavonoids – deficiency is linked to lowered immunity.

Magnesium and calcium are essential for nerve transmission and muscle contraction and can help reduce to reduce muscle soreness.

B group vitamins help our body to handle stress. Stress can affect the immune system and cause recurrent infections.

Echinacea, olive leaf and garlic have antibacterial properties and support the immune system.

Cats claw helps fight viral infections.

Fish oil, evening primrose oil and flaxseed oil can help reduce inflammation.

Glucosamine and chondroitin may reduce joint pain and increase mobility.

Astragalus stabilises the immune system increase. It is recommended during an acute infection, but ideal once the acute symptoms disappear and to help reduce flare ups.

Vitamin B1 is a popular natural insect repellent. Many people report benefits but no actual research can confirm this handy use.

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Did you know?

Ross River fever is a nasty virus that can put you out of action for some time. Below are some handy hints to consider when trying to reduce the risk of mosquito bites:

- **Incubation period** is the interval between getting infected and the onset of symptoms – for RRF it is usually 1-2 weeks.
- **Infectious period** is the time period when an infected person can infect others.
- **During the last few days of the incubation period and for several days following the onset of symptoms** people can pass the virus back to mosquitoes that bite them.
- Many other conditions have similar symptoms. See your healthcare professional for a proper diagnosis – blood tests.
- Covering up as much as possible is the best protection against mosquito bites. Loose fitting light coloured clothes are best. Mosquitoes are tough – they can bite through tight fitted clothes – so forget about wearing jeans.
- **Insect repellents** – tropical strength is usually recommended. These are strong formulas, so be sure to read instructions and use as only as directed. Contact the manufacturer and request a material safety data sheet on the product you purchase.
- **Insect screens** can help keep them out of your safe haven – house, tent or bed. 1mm screens are recommended.

Mosquitoes love fresh and salty water as it creates a perfect breeding environment. Here are some tips to keep breeding sites:

- Never leave open containers which hold water. Keep them covered or discard.
- Pot plant drip trays have sufficient water for breeding. Discard every few three days.
- Drinking water for pets should be changed every three days.
- Boats, canoes, wheel-borrows etc should be overturned to avoid collection of rainwater.
- Openings to water tanks are a prime target. Use wire gauze no coarser than 1 mm mesh.
- Keep roof gutters in clear of any debris that can encourage the build up of water.
- Dispose of all waste water in such a way that no ponding occurs. Keep all open drains and channels free from obstruction, especially weeds, grass, and other debris.
- Fish ponds look great but area perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. Solutions keep the fish pond and add goldfish and Australian natives – one of their favourite dishes is mosquito larvae.