

Public Health Advisory

To:	Medical Officers of Health, Hospital Specialists, After-Hours Centres, Emergency Departments, Primary Care providers, Urgent Care providers, Pharmacists, Regional Infection Prevention and Control teams, Regional Occupational Health team, regional Comms Leads including Hauora Māori & Pacific Health, Office of the Director of Public Health (Manatū Hauora), PHF-Science.
From:	Dr Matt Reid, Public Health Medicine Specialist, NPHS
Date:	30 January 2026
Title:	Dengue outbreaks in the Pacific

# Public Health Advisory: Dengue outbreaks in the Pacific

**\*Please share the following information with relevant staff in your organisation\***

Overview

There are currently significant outbreaks of dengue across the Pacific.

- Dengue serotypes 1 and 2 are circulating in the Cook Islands, Samoa, American Samoa and Kiribati
- Dengue serotype 2 is circulating in Nauru and Tuvalu
- Other Pacific countries remain at risk of similar outbreaks

This had led to an increase in dengue cases in NZ with 86 cases being reported so far in 2026, 75 of these associated with travel to the Cook Islands. These case numbers have been increasing week on week.

Actions for healthcare professionals

Advise people travelling to the Pacific to protect themselves from mosquitoes and of the risk of dengue. If they have previously had dengue, they are at increased risk of dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Please remain vigilant for recent travellers who may present with symptoms of dengue.

Notification of dengue should be made to the local medical officer of health on suspicion.

NB: Public health services are asked to please complete the field in EpiSurv specifying the location visited within the country the arboviral disease was likely acquired where possible (village, resort, island, region). This information is helpful to inform local outbreak responses, particularly in Pacific Islands.

Transmission of dengue

Dengue fever is not spread from person to person. People become infected with the dengue virus after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Symptoms of dengue

While many people with dengue do not have symptoms, or only feel mildly unwell, some may experience the following symptoms:

- sudden onset of fever
- headache, particularly retro orbital
- myalgia and arthralgia

- a fine rash, which may be itchy, usually begins on the extremities, but spares the palms and soles of the feet
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain
- Dengue can also cause respiratory symptoms such as cough and sore throat

Symptoms usually start 3 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. They can last from 2 to 7 days.

### Warning signs of severe dengue

A small number of people may get severe dengue within 2 to 5 days of their symptoms starting. This is more likely to occur the second time a person is infected with dengue, when it may constitute dengue haemorrhagic fever. Warning signs include:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Mucosal bleeding
- Liver enlargement
- Fluid accumulation
- Persistent vomiting

People with severe dengue symptoms should be referred to hospital for management of haemorrhagic manifestations and possible hypovolaemic shock.

### Further Information

Please follow HealthPathways advice for Fever in Returning Travellers

Laboratory testing involves full blood count (leucopenia, thrombocytopenia, elevated ALT, increased HCT), and testing for the dengue virus (PCR) or antigen and/or serology tests.

Treatment is supportive, but NSAIDs (ibuprofen/aspirin) should be avoided. Seek infectious diseases advice if concerned, including if your patient has previously had dengue or there are any signs of bleeding.

### Advice for people travelling to the Pacific

- Please advise travellers to the Pacific to protect themselves from mosquito bites.
  - DEET is the best repellent for preventing bites from mosquitoes which carry dengue and other mosquito borne illnesses. Recommended concentrations are 20% - 50% for adults and 20% - 30% for children over 2 months old.
  - Other ways to prevent being bitten by mosquitos include wearing light coloured protective clothing, including, hats, long sleeves and trousers when outdoors; staying or sleeping in well screened locations, or under mosquito nets; getting rid of or staying away from standing water.
- Travellers should contact their GP, Hauora Māori, Pacific provider or Healthline if they develop fever or other symptoms after returning to NZ. If they develop symptoms while visiting the Pacific, they are encouraged to seek healthcare locally.
- Further information about dengue can be found [here](#), and guidance on how to stay healthy when travelling is available [here](#).
- Additional travel advice is available at [safetravel.govt.nz/destinations](https://safetravel.govt.nz/destinations)

### Contacts

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