



Barmah Forest virus

What is Barmah Forest virus infection?

Barmah Forest infection is caused by a virus that is spread by infected mosquitoes.

What are the symptoms of Barmah Forest virus infection?

Symptoms of Barmah Forest virus infection may include:

- fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle pain
- joint swelling
- stiffness and pain, especially in the mornings
- rash, usually on your torso or limbs
- tiredness or weakness

If you get these symptoms, contact a doctor right away, or Health Direct on 1800 022 222 or in an emergency call Triple Zero (000) or visit your nearest emergency department.

Many people with Barmah Forest virus infection do not have symptoms. When they occur, symptoms usually develop about 7-10 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Most people with Barmah Forest virus infection recover completely within a few weeks. Others may experience symptoms such as joint pain and tiredness for many months.

How is the Barmah Forest virus spread?

It is spread when a mosquito bites an infected animal or human and then this mosquito bites a human. The virus is not spread directly from person to person.

Who has a higher chance of getting Barmah Forest virus infection?

Those who are more likely to get Barmah Forest virus infection are people who live or spend time west of the Great Dividing Range, especially:

- around wetlands or rivers
- if they spend a lot of time outside (e.g., camping, fishing, hiking, gardening).

How do I avoid the Barmah Forest virus?

There is currently no vaccine against Barmah Forest. The best way to avoid the virus is to not get bitten by mosquitoes. Protect yourself:

- use insect repellent. The best mosquito repellents have diethyltoluamide (DEET), picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- wear long, loose fitting and light-coloured clothing and covered shoes when outside
- do not spend lots of time outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active
- cover all windows, doors, vents, and other entrances with insect screens
- remove any containers that hold water where mosquitoes may breed
- use insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units (inside), and mosquito coils (outdoors) to clear rooms and repel mosquitoes from an area
- use mosquito nets or screens

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

If you have the symptoms listed above, a doctor may run a blood test to find if there are antibodies to Barmah Forest virus. Blood samples are taken while the person is unwell and then again two weeks later. This will check to see if there has been a change in the antibody levels, indicating recent infection.

How is Barmah Forest virus infection virus treated?

There is no specific treatment available for Barmah Forest virus infection. Your doctor will be able to advise you on treating the symptoms.

What is the public health response?

Laboratories are required to notify cases of Barmah Forest virus infection on diagnosis. Where cases occur in unexpected locations, the public health unit may investigate further.

For further information please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

Visit: www.health.nsw.gov.au/mosquitoes