

Japanese Encephalitis



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مركز الأمراض الإنتقالية
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Japanese Encephalitis

Introduction

Japanese encephalitis (JE) is the main cause of viral encephalitis in many Asian countries. The infection is spread through an infected mosquito bite that favors breeding sites in and around rice paddy fields.

Although symptomatic, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) is rare. The case-fatality rate can be as high as 30%. Permanent neurologic or psychiatric abnormality can occur in 30%–50% of those with encephalitis.

24 countries in South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Western Pacific regions have endemic JE transmission, which mainly occurs during the warm season.

JE primarily affects children but individuals of any age may be affected. Most adults in endemic countries have natural immunity after childhood infection.

The Illness

Most JEV infections are asymptomatic or cause mild infection (fever and headache). Approximately 1 in 250 infections result in severe clinical illness. Severe disease is characterized by rapid onset of high fever, headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, seizures, spastic paralysis and ultimately death.

Treatment

There is no antiviral treatment for patients with JE.

Treatment is supportive to relieve symptoms and stabilize the patient.

Recommendations for travelers

Prevention focused on avoiding mosquito bites, especially around dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

Use insect repellents, appropriate clothing and mosquito nets while at risk.

Individuals should consider vaccination if they are travelling to a country where Japanese Encephalitis is present and where their stay may be prolonged or they are at increased risk of exposure to the disease e.g. staying in or around rice growing areas.

If you are bitten by mosquitoes:

- Avoid scratching mosquito bites.
- Apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce itching.

Vaccination

Vaccines can protect against Japanese Encephalitis and are available as a two-dose vaccine given 4 weeks apart. It is approved for all ages - from 2 months and above.

The JE vaccine IXIARO® is available at the Communicable Disease Center Travel Clinic and is chargeable.