

**Information for Travelers and Residents**  
**Warden Message**  
**U.S. Embassy Belmopan, Belize**  
**July 22, 2009**

The U.S. Embassy in Belmopan alerts U.S. citizens to information regarding cases of Dengue Fever in Belize. The following consists of excerpts from a recent Ministry of Health Press Release.

Dengue is an infectious disease that is transmitted by the bite of *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes, which breed in fresh water stored in natural or artificial containers in and around human dwellings, such as old tires, flowerpots, and water storage containers. This day-biting species is most active in early morning and late afternoon.

Over the past six weeks, the Belize Ministry of Health has documented an increase in the number of suspected Dengue Fever cases occurring primarily in Cayo District. According to the Ministry of Health's National Epidemiologist, Mr. Ethan Gough, this increase exceeds the expected number of cases for this time of year and the limited geographic distribution to date fits the criteria of a Dengue Outbreak.

According to the Ministry, 184 suspected cases were reported countrywide to date, with 114 occurring in Cayo District. Forty-five (45) cases have been confirmed by the Central Medical Laboratory in Belize City, and a number of specimens await confirmation. Seventeen (17) cases were clinically diagnosed as Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, the majority of which came from Cayo District.

According to the Ministry of Health activities that should be done to prevent Dengue Fever include:

- washing water storage containers such as drums at least once a week,
- changing the water in flower pots every 4 or 5 days,
- disposing of containers that can collect water in your yard (e.g. empty cans, tires), and
- keeping vats, drums, buckets and other containers which collect water properly covered.

Doing the above can help eliminate some of the ideal breeding sites for the mosquito that transmits Dengue.

**However, the Ministry of Health has also stated that the public is encouraged to use mosquito repellent spray or lotion on the body or clothing, and to stay in well-screened areas.**

As a result of the outbreak, the Ministry of Health has enhanced its efforts to increase ULV spray cycles especially in the Cayo District. It has also embarked on a public education campaign to inform the general public on ways to prevent the transmission of Dengue. Vector Control personnel from the Ministry of Health will be redoubling efforts

to conduct premise inspections, identification of breeding sites and the elimination of larvae.

Dengue Fever begins with sudden onset of high fever (104 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit). Other signs and symptoms include headache; eye or eyeball pain; joint, muscle or back pain; nausea, lack of appetite or vomiting; rashes; unusual bleeding (i.e., from the gums, heavy menstrual bleeding, etc.), unexplained bruises, and general weakness.

Dengue Fever is a disease that must be taken very seriously, in particular if you have had these symptoms in the past, and every effort should be made to keep yourself, your family and your community safe by maintaining a clean environment.

For further information about Dengue Fever, including steps you can take to stay healthy, please consult the United States Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization websites.

To obtain Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) travel notices, you may dial the CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) from within the U.S., and at 1-404-639-3534 from overseas, or visit their website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For the World Health Organization, go to <http://www.searo.who.int/en/Section10/Section332/Section1631.htm>.

For the latest security information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, and health-information resources can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers in other areas by calling a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Americans living in or traveling to Belize are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Belize. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at #4 Floral Park Road, Belmopan City, Belize; Tel: 501-822-4011 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or after hours at 501-610-5030, Fax: 501-822-4050; E-mail: [consulbelize@state.gov](mailto:consulbelize@state.gov); Website: [Belize.usembassy.state.gov](http://Belize.usembassy.state.gov).