



**Minister of Health and Wellness
Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, MP
National Broadcast Statement - Dengue Outbreak
Sunday, December 8, 2019**

EMBARGO UNTIL: 6:00 p.m. Sunday, December 8, 2019

Good evening,

As we approach the end of the year, the health sector faces its busiest time with increase in vector borne disease, gastroenteritis, influenza and Influenza Like Illnesses as well as trauma. As a result, there is an increase in waiting times as most public health facilities will be seeing increased numbers of patients.

Dengue Fever is a big challenge that we face now. Dengue has become a major public health problem worldwide. The *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes are transmitters of the dengue virus.

Dengue is the fastest spreading mosquito-borne viral disease in the world. In the last 50 years, incidences have increased 30 times, being estimated at 390 million cases per year, with 96 million cases manifesting symptoms. This viral infection is endemic in over 100 countries including Jamaica, with frequent outbreaks.

In the Region of the Americas, for 2019 up to the end of September, a total of 2.6 Million cases of dengue have been reported, including 1,080 deaths. The number of cases reported in 2019 is higher than the annual totals reported ever before in the Region of the Americas.



Dengue Fever is preventable. Prevention begins with stopping the mosquitos from breeding. In this regard, the Ministry of Health & Wellness has stepped up its enhanced vector control programme to include:

- One thousand temporary Vector Control Workers employed to do public education and “search and destroy” activities in communities to eliminate breeding sites;
- Expanded Fogging Programme to kill the adult mosquitos in high-risk and other communities;
- And we have rolled out a Public Education Campaign in all forms of media to educate and inform all members of the public on how to decrease their risk and treat the illness if they should become infected.

We have partnered with the National Solid Waste Management Authority for Solid Waste Removal; and the Municipal Corporations and MPs for Vector Control activities in Communities;

The Ministry has also:

- Increased opening hours in some health centres up to 8:00 pm and on Saturdays in some clinics;
- Provided Free Treatment for Children under 12 years old at the University Hospital of the West Indies; and
- Activated Emergency Operation Centres at the Ministry and in all Parishes.

Additional vehicles and fogging machines have been purchased and more resources allocated to MPs and various Ministries and state entities.



In addition to fogging done by the Ministry we are asking that householders be more proactive in dealing with the mosquitos that cause Dengue. We have utilised, in the past, a protocol whereby householders spray the inside of their homes with a domestic insecticide, such as Baygon and Pyrex. This exercise targets mosquitos in areas of the home that are not usually reached by fogging such as in the closets and under the bed.

Persons who have respiratory illness or who are at risk for respiratory illnesses such as asthma should not participate in this exercise.

To decrease the likelihood of health effects of the spraying, all persons must leave the space for at least 20 minutes after spraying and take other precautions as necessary.

I make a special appeal to all Jamaicans to partner with the Government by taking action, including searching your surroundings at home, workplace, school and communities for mosquito breeding sites. I ask also that you support our routine vector control activities, by allowing the workers to safely carry out their duties.

Jamaicans, prevention is better than cure, so let us destroy those mosquito breeding sites. In the event, that you display symptoms including fever, headache, vomiting or rash, please visit your doctor or health centre to get treatment. At the same time, please exercise patience and cooperate with our health care workers. Together we can work to end this outbreak and to ensure that everyone, especially persons at high risk, including our children and the elderly are safe and in good health.

I wish for all of you a happy and safe holiday season.

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