

Malaysia warns on dengue as deaths spike

November 4 2013

A Malaysian health official on Monday warned citizens to take steps to eliminate mosquito breeding spots as dengue fever cases have spiked.

The number of reported cases of the infection, which causes severe fever, headaches and joint pain and can trigger fatal haemorrhaging and [death](#), has soared compared to last year, and deaths have doubled.

Between January and late October, 28,200 cases and 60 deaths were recorded, according to government statistics.

There were 17,800 cases and 29 deaths during the same period last year.

Officials have said a key factor has been frequent heavy downpours in recent weeks.

The disease is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which, like other mosquitos, breeds in stagnant water and other damp spots.

Lokman Hakim Sulaiman, who heads the health ministry's public health division, said the ministry was calling on all Malaysians to "destroy all the breeding places," such as illegal dump sites.

"We are trying to get the community to help make the environment free of the mosquitoes," he told AFP, adding the ministry was working with local-level [health officials](#) to spread awareness.

He said prevention was key, due to the lack of proven vaccines or

treatment.

"The problem with [dengue](#) is that we don't have enough tools to manage the situation. It's a global challenge," he said.

Dengue fever affects between 50 and 100 million people in the tropics and subtropics each year.

Countries ranging from Nicaragua to Pakistan have in recent weeks reported deadly outbreaks.

In Singapore, which borders Malaysia, more than 19,000 people have been infected this year, according to a government website tracking the problem.

Five have died.

The previous high for number of cases in Singapore came in 2005, when 13,984 infections were recorded, according to official data. Twenty-five people died that year.

Singapore authorities have responded this year by distributing insect repellent to every household and recruiting hundreds of disease-control officers.

Researchers estimate that around three billion people in the world live in regions susceptible to dengue contagion.

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