



Ross River fever

Mosquitoes!

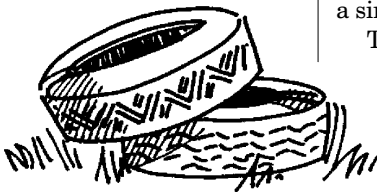
They love the weather and the country of the North Coast.

They breed in the salt marshes of river estuaries and in low lying water left after periods of heavy rain. They even breed in the water left in roof gutters, around the base of outdoor flower pots and in old tyre dumps.

Apart from being a nuisance and interfering with our enjoyment of any outdoor activities, especially around dusk, mosquitoes may make us very sick.

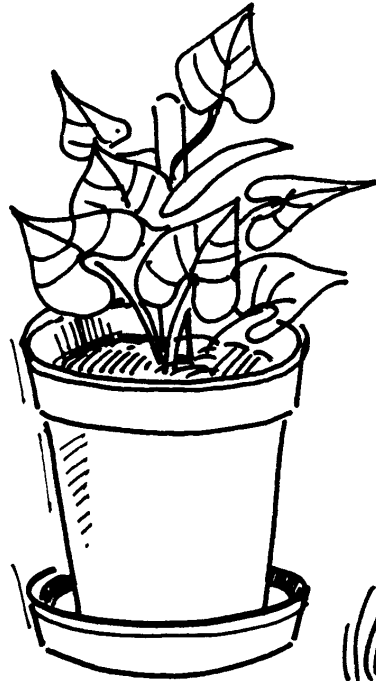
Certain mosquitoes are responsible for passing on more than an itchy lump when they bite - they can also pass on the virus that causes Ross River fever.

This is an extremely common infection on the North Coast, with more than one third of the total cases reported in NSW.



Whenever conditions become favourable to the breeding of mosquitoes, we see outbreaks here. For example, when there is prolonged heavy rain in the warmer months of the year, as these leave shallow pools of water for mosquitoes to breed in.

Ross River fever causes a flu-like illness with symptoms such as joint pain or swelling (arthritis), fever, lethargy and skin rash. Some patients even go on to develop an illness like chronic fatigue syndrome,



from which it can take many months to recover.

Your doctor is able to diagnose this infection with a simple blood test.

There is no specific treatment for the virus and no known vaccine.

The only way to protect against Ross River fever is PREVENTION. This means anything that stops people and mosquitoes from coming into contact with each other:

- *If outside between dusk and dawn, cover up with light coloured clothes, so there is no exposed skin for the mosquitoes to bite.*
- *Use an insect repellent.*
- *Fix household insect screens.*
- *Empty pools of water around the house, like full gutters, plant saucers, etc.*
- *Sleep under a mosquito net.*

The good news is that one bout of Ross River fever usually means you are immune for life. Many people who have grown up in this area have had a mild, probably unrecognised form of the infection as a child



and are immune.

However, the North Coast is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and many of the people moving here have never been in contact with this virus. Many of these people are at special risk, especially if they spend a lot of time out of doors in the evenings.

So, to prevent the very nasty effects of Ross River fever, take care to keep mosquitoes out of your life.

