



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



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# HEALTH BEHAVIOUR AND DENGUE FEVER

I write this article because I have been trying to understand why we in Trinidad and Tobago do not take some things as seriously as we should, one of the most important of all being our health. No nation can progress or develop if the population is unhealthy, and while I can go on the issues of how we ate nowadays as compared to times past, I am currently pre-occupied with the issue of dengue fever.

Your lifestyle is a fundamental feature of your everyday life that is formed by your behavior, choices, and experiences as a member of society that are developed through a process of socialization, influenced by the family, church, school, peers, and other associations. Socialization includes norms, attitudes and values that are understood as relatively stable patterns of behavior that are typical to any society, including issues related to our health.

Health behavior associated with getting dengue fever is of paramount importance at this time because of growing knowledge and awareness of the disease, but many people are still not taking action to protect themselves and their families. In Trinidad and Tobago, most members of society know that dengue fever is caused by mosquitoes, and mosquitoes can breed in water containers, yet they still fail to do what is best for their community, as I often see open containers in public and private spaces which can lead to the breeding of these insects, which in turn has a negative impact on our health and our society. I will not even go into the issue of the increased costs of health on the public purse as we are often overburdened in the health centres and hospitals as a result of dengue, and I will also not go into the cost to businesses and the nation in relation to days lost on the job as many of the workers fall prey to this disease which reduces the level of productivity in our nation.

It is therefore that the mosquito is known as *Aedes aegypti*/tiger mosquito with its inborn genetic affinity for clean water seems to thrive in our country,

especially when the water is stored uncovered or when it is collected in used containers such as used tires, plastic bottles, cups, plates faulty water guttering and overgrowth of bush on vacant premises. As such, we have to be more aware in our battle with this mosquito, and this requires a certain amount of responsibility by members of society. This is true for our sanitation and water collection techniques, our absent-minded approach to covering water collection sources, educating the younger generation on the perils of dengue fever, and ensuring that we change our individual and collective behaviour to better combat dengue fever.

It can be argued that due to the unreliable supply of water in many areas locally, private water storage is necessary. I am arguing that while that may be so, we still have a responsibility to store that water safely with the knowledge that we have to secure our personal and public health in all that we do.

For dengue fever to become endemic in Trinidad and Tobago, certainly there must be some form of interaction between the two species, man and mosquito.

Therefore, not getting dengue fever (or allowing it to spread unfettered) depends on members of society's ability to identify and reduce the risk factors. Risk in this instance is associated with appropriate

health behavior such as mentioned in this article, as well as better knowledge and practice of water storage efforts, as well as not implementing health protective behaviors. Health-protective behaviors will have immediate or long-term effects on an individual's health and are at least partially within the individual's control.

While no system is perfect, and while there are improvements to be made in the water supply locally, we still have to be responsible for the safety of ourselves, our loved ones, our community and our

nation. Thus, I am making the plea, that while we are consumed with thoughts of carnival and the accompanied festivities, that we take a moment to consider health issues that will affect us all.

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