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HEALTHY LIVING
COVID-19
CONDITIONS

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Dengue Survivors Face Higher Long-Term Risks Than COVID-19 Recovery Patients: Study

Published Aug 27, 2024 1:01 AM EDT By [Suneeta Sunny](#)



Studies have already indicated an increased risk of heart complications and neurological disorders in those who recovered from COVID-19 infection. (PHOTO: IMAGE BY FREEPIK)

The survivors who are recovering after dengue fever may face a higher risk of long-term complications compared to those recovering after COVID-19 infection, a new study revealed.

In the year after the infection, patients recovering from dengue have a 55% higher risk of heart complications such as irregular heartbeats, heart disease, and blood clots compared to COVID-19 survivors. The concerning discovery came when researchers investigated the long-term implications of dengue, particularly in the context of its expanding geographic range due to climate change.

"Dengue is one of the most common vector-borne diseases globally, and long-term health issues resulting from dengue can substantially increase the healthcare burdens of the infected person and the country. We also decided to compare the results against those who recovered from COVID-19 as our previous work had suggested an increased risk of similar long-term health complications," the lead author of the study, Assistant Professor Lim Jue Tao, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine in Singapore, said in a [news release](#).

"Overall, our study underscores the need for people to guard against dengue in their environment and can be a resource to support public health planning." Jue Tao added.

The [study](#) published in the Journal of Travel Medicine examined the tests and medical claim records of 11,707 residents with reported dengue infection and 1,248,326 patients who had COVID-19 between July 2021 and October 2022 in Singapore. The participants were then followed up for newly diagnosed health issues such as heart, neurological, and immune disorders between 31 and 300 days after the infection.

While comparing the risk for long-term complications, the researchers noted that those recovering from dengue had a 55% higher risk of any heart complications, 213% increased risk of cognition or memory disorders, and 198% increased risk of movement disorders compared to COVID-19 patients.

The researchers used the COVID-19 survivors as a baseline for comparison, as studies have already indicated an increased risk of heart complications and neurological disorders in those who recovered from the infection.

"This study is crucial as it provides the first comprehensive comparison of post-recovery health issues between dengue and COVID-19 patients, offering valuable insights for healthcare planning and patient management. Additionally, the findings underscore the need for increased vigilance and targeted interventions for those recovering from dengue to mitigate long-term health impacts," said an independent expert, Professor Kwok Kin-on, infectious diseases epidemiologist at The Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care, Chinese University of Hong Kong.