CDC: Ross River virus disease in Australia

What is the current situation?
According to the Department of Health in Australia, as of April 17, 2015, a total of 6,054 Ross River virus disease (RRVD) cases have been reported. This is the largest number of reported cases since 1996. Most cases have occurred in the city of Brisbane and the surrounding areas of the state of Queensland.

CDC recommends that travelers to Australia protect themselves from RRVD by preventing mosquito bites.

What is RRVD?
RRVD is spread through mosquito bites. About 55%–75% of people who are infected do not feel sick. For those who do feel sick, symptoms of RRVD include joint pain and swelling, muscle pain, fever, tiredness, and rash. Most patients recover within a few weeks, but some people experience joint pain, joint stiffness or tiredness for many months.

Travelers who plan to spend a lot of time outdoors or who will be in areas with a lot of mosquitoes are at increased risk of RRVD. Disease risk is likely to decrease with the colder weather during the coming winter months in Australia. Ross River virus infection is the most common mosquito-related infection in Australia.

What can travelers do to prevent RRVD?
No vaccine or medicine can prevent RRVD. The only way to prevent RRVD is to prevent mosquito bites.

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent as directed.
- Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection. Use products with the following active ingredients:

  - DEET (Products containing DEET include Off!, Cutter, Sawyer, and Ultrathon)
Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin products containing picaridin include Cutter Advanced, Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus, and Autan [outside the US])
Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or PMD (Products containing OLE include Repel and Off! Botanicals)
IR3535 (Products containing IR3535 include Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Expedition and SkinSmart)

Always follow product directions and reapply as directed.
If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
Follow package directions when applying repellent on children. Avoid applying repellent to their hands, eyes, and mouth.
Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself:
Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See the product information to find out how long the protection will last.
If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
Stay and sleep in screened or air conditioned rooms.
Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.

If you feel sick and think you may have RRVD:
Talk to your doctor or nurse if you feel seriously ill, especially if you have a fever.
Tell him or her about your travel.
For more information about medical care abroad, see Getting Health Care Abroad.

Traveler Information
Avoid Bug Bites—Information for travelers

Clinician Information
