

Information for travellers

CHIKUNGUNYA



Chikungunya is a virus that is transmitted from human to human mainly by infected *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (later referred to as *Aedes* mosquitoes). The virus causes sudden onset of high fever, severe joint pain, muscle pain and headache. While Chikungunya fever is usually non-fatal, a small number of patients may develop serious complications or chronic conditions. As no vaccine or medication is available, it is important to protect yourself from mosquito bites when traveling to areas where virus transmission occurs in order to prevent becoming infected with the virus.

How do humans become infected by Chikungunya?

The virus is spread mainly by the bites of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. These mosquito types are characterised by white stripes on their black bodies and legs.

What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

The symptoms of Chikungunya include sudden onset of high fever, severe joint pain, muscle pain and headaches. The symptoms appear on average 4 to 7 days (but can range from 1 to 12 days) after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

While most patients recover after a few days to a couple of weeks, a small number of patients may develop chronic joint pains. Other possible, but rare, complications include gastro-intestinal or cardiovascular complications.

Where could Chikungunya be a risk?

Chikungunya was first identified in Tanzania and Uganda in 1953. Since then, outbreaks have taken place in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean. On the European continent, an outbreak was reported in Italy in 2007.

Please refer to ECDC's website for information on countries that experience outbreaks: http://ecdc.europa.eu/Health_topics/Chikungunya_Fever/Disease_facts.html

How is Chikungunya treated?

No vaccine or medication is currently available to prevent or cure the infection; only symptomatic treatment is available.

How can I prevent becoming infected by Chikungunya?

In order to avoid contracting Chikungunya (or other mosquito-borne infections), precautions to avoid mosquito bites should be taken when staying in risk areas:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long trousers
- Use mosquito repellents, coils or other devices that will help fend off mosquitoes
 - Pregnant women, people with immune disorders or severe chronic illnesses, and children under 12 years should see their doctor to receive personalised recommendations on options for protection before travelling
- If possible, sleep under bed nets pre-treated with insecticides
- If possible, set the air-conditioning to a low temperature at night – mosquitoes do not like cold temperatures

What should I do if I suspect that I have Chikungunya?

If you experience the symptoms described above,

- please see a doctor who can make the correct diagnosis, and
- limit the risk of further mosquito bites as much as possible - this will help prevent the virus from spreading to others in case you do have Chikungunya