



Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Health

July 29, 2014
Chikungunya Virus



Chikungunya Questions & Answers

What is Chikungunya?

It is an infection spread to humans by mosquitos that can cause debilitating illness. It has been seen in Southern Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and some islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It was first seen in the Caribbean and Americas in late 2013. No locally acquired District of Columbia cases have been reported as of the date of this notice, but locally acquired cases have been seen in Florida.

How do I get Chikungunya?

Chikungunya is a viral disease that can be transmitted to humans through bites received from some types of infected mosquitos. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is most commonly associated with the spread of Chikungunya, and also transmits Dengue and Yellow Fever. This mosquito is mostly found in the tropics and sub-tropics. The *Aedes albopictus* mosquito, which transmits Dengue and West Nile viruses, have also been known to transmit Chikungunya, and have a much wider distribution including Washington, DC and the surrounding areas.

What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

The symptoms of the disease are typically seen 3 – 7 days after an infected mosquito's bite transmits the virus. Fever and severe joint pains are the most common symptoms, but headaches, muscle pain, joint swelling and rash are also seen.

How do I know that I have Chikungunya?

If you suspect that you may have Chikungunya you should make an appointment to see your doctor. Your doctor will determine the appropriate tests to order to investigate the cause of your symptoms. A diagnosis of Chikungunya can be confirmed through a blood test that can detect the virus.

What is the treatment for Chikungunya?

There is no treatment for the Chikungunya virus, but medications can be used to help control the symptoms of fever and pain.

Are there long term problems associated with the disease?

The disease typically last approximately 7 – 10 days, joint pains can last longer. Symptoms occasionally recur in 2 – 3 months after resolving. Symptoms may last for up to several months, though this is more common in newborns and adults 65 years and older, who may have longer lasting and more severe disease. People with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure may also have more severe infections. Death resulting from the disease is rare.

What can I do to avoid getting infected with Chikungunya?

There is currently no vaccine available for the Chikungunya Virus, so all of the ways to avoid infection are aimed at limiting exposure to infected mosquitoes. Travel to areas with high rates of infection should be limited. Countries with reports of Chikungunya can be seen at the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control website (<http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/geo/index.html>). Use of mosquito repellent on exposed skin, air conditioning and closed or screened windows, long sleeve shirts and pants and treating clothing with permethrin can all help reduce the risk of mosquito bites. Mosquito populations can be controlled by the following actions:

- Dispose of cans, bottles and open containers properly and store recycling in covered containers
- Remove discarded tires, and drill drainage holes in tires used on playground equipment
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts regularly, eliminate standing water from flat roofs
- Turn over plastic wading pools, wheelbarrows, and canoes when not in use
- Cover waste containers with tight-fitting lids; never allow lids or cans to accumulate water
- Flush bird baths and potted plant trays twice each week
- Adjust tarps over grills, firewood piles, boats or swimming pools to eliminate small pockets of water from standing several days
- Re-grade low areas where water stands; clean debris in ditches to eliminate standing water
- Maintain swimming pools, clean and chlorinate them as needed, aerate garden ponds and treat with “mosquito dunks” found at hardware stores
- Fix dripping water faucets outside and eliminate puddles from air conditioners
- Store pet food and water bowls inside when not in use

Individuals who do become infected with the Chikungunya virus should be especially careful to avoid mosquito bites and follow the above mosquito control recommendation as they can potentially spread the infection to local mosquito populations.

Additional information on Chikungunya can be found at the following:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>.
- Contact the DC Department of Health Department of Epidemiology, Disease Surveillance & Investigation at 202-442-8141