

Chikungunya Virus Infection Frequently Asked Questions

What is Chikungunya?

Chikungunya (pronunciation: \chik-en-gun-ye) is a viral disease that is transmitted to people by mosquitoes. It has occurred in Africa, Southern Europe, Southeast Asia, and islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In late 2013, Chikungunya was found for the first time on islands in the Caribbean. Chikungunya virus is not currently found in the United States. There is a risk that the virus will be imported to new areas by infected travelers.

How is Chikungunya spread?

Chikungunya virus is most often spread to people by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These are the same mosquitoes that transmit dengue virus. The mosquito becomes infected with Chikungunya virus when it bites a person who has Chikungunya. During the first week of infection, Chikungunya virus can be found in the blood of an infected person and is passed to another mosquito when the mosquito takes a blood meal. An infected mosquito can then transmit the virus to other people.

Chikungunya virus is transmitted rarely from mother to newborn around the time of birth. In theory, the virus could be spread through a blood transfusion, although there are no known reports of this to date.

What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

Most people infected with Chikungunya virus will develop some symptoms. Symptoms usually begin 3–7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms are fever and joint pain. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash. Chikungunya disease does not often result in death, but the symptoms can be severe and disabling. Most patients feel better within a week. In some people, the joint pain may persist for months.

People at risk for more severe disease include newborns infected around the time of birth, older adults (≥ 65 years), and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease. Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections. If you have any concerns about your health, you should contact your healthcare provider.

What is the treatment for Chikungunya?

There is no medicine to treat Chikungunya virus infection or disease. In order to decrease the symptoms, get plenty of rest, drink fluids to prevent dehydration, and take medicines such as ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen, or paracetamol to relieve fever and pain.

Is there a vaccine for Chikungunya?

There is no vaccine to protect humans against Chikungunya virus infection.

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Where can outbreaks of Chikungunya occur?

Outbreaks of Chikungunya occur primarily in areas where certain species of mosquito (*Aedes aegypti* and sometimes also *Aedes albopictus*) live. These include most tropical urban areas of the world. Chikungunya virus may be introduced into areas by travelers who become infected while visiting other areas of the tropics where Chikungunya commonly exists. (See maps at <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/index.html> and <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs327/en/>).

Can these mosquitoes be found in Georgia?

Aedes aegypti, the yellow fever mosquito, is found only rarely in Georgia and only in a few areas. *Aedes albopictus*, the Asian tiger mosquito, is found all over Georgia. These are both aggressive mosquitoes that bite mostly during the daytime. These mosquitoes primarily live near peoples' homes and do not fly very far. Both species breed in containers, so removing containers or dumping out any standing water at least once a week, or using larvicides such as mosquito dunks or mosquito torpedoes in water that cannot be dumped out, will reduce the number of these mosquitoes around the home.

How concerned should I be about Chikungunya in Georgia?

Chikungunya outbreaks have occurred in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In late 2013, the first local transmission of Chikungunya virus in the Americas was identified in Caribbean countries and territories. Local transmission means that mosquitoes in the area have been infected with the virus and are spreading it to people. Although a few cases of Chikungunya have been reported in Georgia, all cases had recent international travel history. There has never been a case of locally-acquired Chikungunya reported in Georgia.

How can I prevent myself from being infected with Chikungunya?

For travelers to areas with Chikungunya, the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes can be reduced by wearing light-weight long sleeves shirts and long pants and staying in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens. Proper application of mosquito repellents containing 20% to 30% DEET as the active ingredient on exposed skin also decreases the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. Bed nets should be used to help prevent exposure to malaria, but since *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* bite during the day, bed nets will not help prevent exposure to Chikungunya or dengue.

What should I do if I have recently traveled to a country where Chikungunya has been found?

If you experience fever, joint pain, headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash within 12 days of returning home, contact your healthcare provider and inform them of your travel history. Minimize your exposure to mosquitoes in the area to avoid transmission the disease locally. When indoors, use air conditioning and/or ensure that there are no holes in screens on windows and doors. When outdoors, wear long sleeved shirts and pants and/or use mosquito repellent containing 20-30% DEET on exposed skin.

Whom should I contact for more information?

For general information about Chikungunya and surveillance for mosquito-borne diseases in Georgia, call your District or County Health Department or the Georgia Department of Public Health at 404-657-2588. You may also visit the Georgia Department of Public Health website at <http://dph.georgia.gov/zoonoticvector-borneinfestations>.

For national Chikungunya virus data, visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/index.html>.

