

Chikungunya virus

July 2014 | Page 1 of 2

What is chikungunya (pronounced chik-en-gun-ye)?

Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne virus (germ) that can cause an illness with fever and severe joint pain.

How is chikungunya spread?

Chikungunya is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Unlike West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus, which are bird viruses that occasionally get spread to people, chikungunya is carried mainly by people.

Outbreaks of chikungunya have occurred in countries in Africa, southern Europe, Southeast Asia, and on islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. At the end of 2013, chikungunya was found on islands in the Caribbean Sea for the first time.

How common is chikungunya in Massachusetts?

The kinds of mosquitoes that are known to carry chikungunya are only occasionally found in Massachusetts and at this time it is extremely unlikely that someone would become infected with chikungunya here. However, more and more travelers to the Caribbean are getting bitten by infected mosquitoes during their trip and getting diagnosed with chikungunya after they come back home.

What are the symptoms of chikungunya?

Most people who are exposed to chikungunya will develop illness. The symptoms start 3-7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms are a fever and severe joint pain, often in the hands and feet. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling and a rash. Most people feel better within about a week. However, some people may have joint pain for longer.

Am I at risk for chikungunya?

At this time, only people traveling to places with ongoing chikungunya outbreaks are at risk for getting the disease. If you are traveling to the Caribbean, you should check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for information about where it is occurring <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/chikungunya-saint-martin>.

Unlike mosquito-borne illness here in Massachusetts, chikungunya is spread by mosquitoes that bite during the day. This means that when traveling in an area with chikungunya activity, it is especially important to take steps to prevent mosquito bites during daytime hours as well as between dusk and dawn.

Who is at greatest risk for severe disease from chikungunya?

At this time, only people traveling to places with ongoing chikungunya outbreaks are at risk for getting the disease. People at risk for severe disease after being bitten by an infected mosquito include newborns, adults over age 65, and people with underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.



Is there any treatment for chikungunya?

There is no specific treatment for chikungunya infections but most people recover within a week. If you are exposed to mosquitoes while traveling and think you may have chikungunya, call your healthcare provider. They may run tests to see if you were infected and may recommend medications to help reduce your fever and pain.

What can you do to protect yourself from chikungunya?

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<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/chikungunya-saint-martin>.

Since chikungunya is spread by infected mosquitoes, here are some things you can do to reduce your chances of being bitten when you are traveling in an area with chikungunya:

- When you are outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- Use a repellent with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **IR3535** (3-[N-butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid) or **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-menthane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label.
 - DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children.
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.
 - Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.
 - More information on choosing and using repellents safely is included in the MDPH Mosquito Repellents fact sheet which can be viewed online at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito. If you can't go online, contact the MDPH at (617) 983-6800 for a hard copy.
- Try to stay in places that use air conditioning or window and door screens.
- Empty standing water from outdoor containers.

Where can I get more information?

- Your doctor, nurse, or health care clinic, or your local board of health (listed in the telephone directory under local government)
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at (617) 983-6800 or toll-free at (888) 658-2850, or on the MDPH Arbovirus website at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito
- **Health effects of pesticides**, MDPH, Bureau of Environmental Health at 617-624-5757



Massachusetts Department of Public Health Mosquito-borne Disease Website

<http://www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito>

