

### What is chikungunya and how does it spread?

- Chikungunya is a virus that is spread to humans mainly by the bite of an infected mosquito.
- At this time, these mosquitoes are **not** found in Canada.
- Chikungunya may spread through giving blood since the virus lives in the blood after the infection.
- Travellers are at highest risk in tropical / subtropical areas, e.g. tropical Africa and Asia, eastern Mediterranean, Oceania, Southeast Asia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.
- Chikungunya is seldom fatal.
- There is no medication or vaccine that protects against chikungunya at this time.

### What are the signs and symptoms of chikungunya?

- Chikungunya is usually a mild illness that only lasts for a few days; about one in four infected people do not have any symptoms. It is easily confused with dengue fever.
- Others may suddenly develop flu-like symptoms from 1 to 12 days (usually 2 to 3 days) after a bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms generally last from 7 to 10 days.
- The first symptoms are usually high fever (that may come and go) and joint pain, which is severe in 70% of cases.
- Additional symptoms may include chills, headaches, muscle pain, weakness, nausea and vomiting. About half of the people with chikungunya have a rash on their trunk and limbs between the second and fifth day of the illness.
- In older patients, or those with underlying health problems, symptoms can last for 6 months or longer, but serious complications are rare.
- After one year, more than one in five of those who have had an acute illness still suffer from joint pain that comes and goes.

### Who is at risk?

- Though everyone is at risk in chikungunya affected areas, the risk to travellers is lower because they usually take precautions against mosquito bites and stay in air conditioned hotels where mosquito prevention measures are taken.

### How is chikungunya diagnosed?

- Diagnosis is based on level of risk, including travel location, accommodation, season (higher risk when it is warm), activities while travelling, signs and symptoms, and blood tests.
- Confirmation of a diagnosis with a blood test can be difficult if you have been infected before with a similar virus, such as Zika, Dengue Fever or Yellow Fever.

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2016/03/03

## What is the treatment for chikungunya?

- Supportive treatment includes plenty of fluids and rest, and avoiding mosquito bites to reduce spreading it to others. Take acetaminophen / Tylenol® for pain and / or fever.
- Do **not** use medication that contains acetylsalicylic acid (ASA), Naproxen or ibuprofen (NSAIDS), until *dengue fever* has been ruled out, as it may cause bleeding.
- If symptoms worsen, see your health care provider immediately.

## How do I protect myself from chikungunya?

- Chikungunya infected mosquitoes are **daytime biters**, so it is important to prevent mosquito bites all day long, especially early morning and late afternoon, during the entire day if it is overcast, and after dark in well-lit areas or indoors, if they managed to get inside.
- Follow the Insect Precautions Fact Sheet.
- Insect repellents containing DEET and picaridin are safe for pregnant and nursing women and children, if used as directed. Picaridin is preferred for children 6 months to 12 years of age.
- If using both sunscreen and insect repellent, apply the sunscreen first and the insect repellent at least 15 minutes later.

## What else do I need to know?

- If there is a chance you could have the virus, use strict mosquito bite prevention measures to avoid spreading the disease to others, especially during the first week of illness.
- If you think you may have had chikungunya, it is advisable **not** to donate blood until you have discussed it with Canadian Blood Services.
- If you have questions or concerns, consult with your health care provider for the most up-to-date advice.

## References

- CDC Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. July 2015
- Government of Canada. Jan. 2016
- Public Health Agency of Canada. Jan .2016
- Shoreland Travax. Sept.2015

## Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500  
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