

# Chikungunya Virus

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is chikungunya virus?**

Chikungunya 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. Since then, chikungunya has been found in multiple countries or territories in the Caribbean, Central America, or South America. It has never been found locally in New Jersey.

### **Who gets chikungunya virus?**

The virus can affect anyone bitten by an infected mosquito. Although cases have been identified in New Jersey residents, these are people who were infected after traveling to an area with chikungunya. People at an increased risk for severe disease include newborns exposed during delivery, older adults ( $\geq 65$  years), and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease.

### **How do people get chikungunya virus?**

The virus is spread by the bite of a mosquito infected with chikungunya virus. *Aedes* species mosquitoes transmit chikungunya virus; these same types of mosquitoes transmit dengue and Zika viruses and bite during the day and night.

### **What are the symptoms of chikungunya virus?**

The most common symptoms are fever and severe joint pains, often in the hands and feet. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash. Symptoms usually begin 3–7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

### **How is chikungunya virus diagnosed?**

If a health care provider suspects chikungunya, samples of the patient's blood will be examined.

### **What is the treatment for chikungunya virus?**

There are no antiviral medicines to treat chikungunya; however, there are medicines to help reduce the fever and pain.

### **Can people with chikungunya virus pass the illness to others?**

The virus that causes chikungunya virus is spread only by mosquitoes. Chikungunya virus is not spread from person to person.

Rarely, chikungunya virus is transmitted 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 happening to date.

## **How can chikungunya virus be prevented?**

There is no vaccine or medication to prevent chikungunya virus infection or disease. The best way to protect yourself from getting chikungunya virus is to prevent mosquito bites. People at increased risk for severe disease should consider avoiding travel to areas with ongoing chikungunya outbreaks.

### **Follow these steps to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes:**

- Use air conditioning or window/door screens
- Weather permitting, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents such as those with DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on skin or clothing
- Wear clothing treated with permethrin (another type of insect repellent used only on clothing)
- ALWAYS follow directions on the product label of insect repellents
- Support local mosquito control programs—to contact your county mosquito control agency, visit: [www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/pcp/bpo-mfagencies.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/pcp/bpo-mfagencies.htm)

### **Mosquitoes begin to breed in any standing water that lasts for more than four days. Get rid of mosquito breeding sites around the home:**

- Clean out gutters and drains
- Dispose of old tires
- Drain standing water from pool covers, keep pools chlorinated, and flip over plastic children's pools when not in use
- Remove all containers that hold water and empty standing water from outdoor containers
- Change birdbath water every several days
- Make sure all windows and doors have screens and that all screens are in good condition

### **What if I am sick with chikungunya?**

If you are sick with chikungunya, avoid mosquito bites for the week after symptoms start to prevent further spread of the virus.

### **Where can I get more information on chikungunya virus?**

- Your healthcare provider
- Your local health department (directory of local health departments in NJ: [www.state.nj.us/health/lh/documents/lhdirectory.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/health/lh/documents/lhdirectory.pdf))
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/](http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/)

### **Where can I get more information on insect repellents?**

- CDC Insect Repellent Use & Safety: [www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html)
- Environmental Protection Agency Insect Repellents: [www2.epa.gov/insect-repellents](http://www2.epa.gov/insect-repellents)
- American Academy of Pediatrics Insect Repellents: [www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/aap-press-room-media-center/Pages/Insect-Repellents.aspx](http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/aap-press-room-media-center/Pages/Insect-Repellents.aspx)

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care professional. Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Pan American Health Organization.