

Questions and Answers, Chikungunya Virus
July 9, 2014

1. **What is chikungunya?** Chikungunya is a viral infection transmitted to people by mosquitoes. It has caused outbreaks many countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe and was first identified in the Americas in late 2013, primarily in Caribbean nations.
2. **Where has chikungunya virus been found?** The primary concern is ongoing outbreaks of Chikungunya in many Caribbean nations since late 2013. Outbreaks have also been identified in many countries in Africa, Asia For more information see the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>
3. **What are the symptoms of chikungunya?** Unlike West Nile virus, most people infected with chikungunya develop symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever (greater than 102°F) and pain and swelling in multiple joints. Other symptoms include headache, muscle pain and rash. Most infected people recover within 7 days; deaths are rare.
4. **How is chikungunya infection spread?** Chikungunya virus is transmitted to people through mosquito bites. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites.
5. **How long does it take to develop symptoms after a mosquito bite?** Most people develop symptoms with 3-7 days (with a range of 1-12 days) after exposure to an infected mosquito.
6. **Are there mosquitoes in Mississippi that can spread chikungunya?** Yes, a mosquito that potentially transmits the virus is common in Mississippi (*Aedes albopictus*). This mosquito bites mostly during the daytime.
7. **Where do these mosquitoes breed?** This mosquito breeds in very small collections of water such as plastic containers and flower pots, tires, garbage cans and backed up gutters, or any other container that can hold as little as a tablespoon of water. It is important to reduce mosquito breeding areas around your home by emptying any sources of standing water.
8. **Have there been cases of chikungunya in the continental US?** Chikungunya infections have been acquired by US residents traveling in countries where ongoing local transmission is occurring. To date, no local transmission has been identified in the continental US. For information about the virus in the US, see <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/geo/united-states.html>
9. **Have there been cases of chikungunya in Mississippi?** Yes, there have been confirmed cases among Mississippi residents with recent travel to the Caribbean. A number of other suspected cases are under investigation. There has been no local transmission of chikungunya seen in Mississippi (persons infected with chikungunya from mosquito exposure in Mississippi).
10. **What are the concerns?** Returning travelers who are ill with chikungunya could transmit the virus to mosquitoes in Mississippi that could in turn infect other Mississippi residents.
11. **Who is at risk for infection? Currently the highest risk of infection is associated with travel to the Caribbean where local transmission is occurring.** Information is available on the CDC Traveler's Health website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/chikungunya>

- 12. What can travelers do to prevent chikungunya?** Travelers to countries with ongoing local transmission of chikungunya should protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites:
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants
 - Use appropriate insect repellent
 - Stay and sleep in screened or air conditioned rooms.
 - Use a bed net if the sleeping area is exposed to the outdoors
 - See the CDC Traveler's Health website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/chikungunya> for other recommendations
- 13. What if I recently traveled to countries in the Caribbean?** If you or members of your group develop symptoms of fever and joint pain within 14 days of traveling from countries in the Caribbean or other countries with known local transmission of chikungunya virus, you should see your healthcare provider and mention your recent travel.
- 14. Are there any precautions I should take if I have had recent travel to the Caribbean and am now sick?** Yes, you should avoid mosquito exposures. The virus can stay in your blood for up to 10 days after you become ill. During this time, to prevent mosquito exposures and further spread of the virus, you are asked to do the following:
- Stay indoors as much as possible over the first 10 days after onset of your illness;
 - If you must go outdoors, use appropriate mosquito repellent and wear long sleeve shirt and pants;
 - Have standing water emptied from outdoor containers. Do not attempt to clean up any mosquito breeding areas yourself during the first 10 days of your illness.
- 15. Is there a laboratory test available?**
Yes, blood tests to detect chikungunya infection are available through your healthcare provider
- 16. Is there a vaccine?** No vaccine exists to prevent chikungunya virus infection.
- 17. What are the treatments?** There is no medicine to treat chikungunya virus infection: treatment is through supportive care. Persons who think they may have chikungunya infection should see their healthcare provider.
- 18. What is MSDH doing?** MSDH is working with local physicians and healthcare providers to identify individuals who may be infected, working with local mosquito control programs and working to provide education to the public.