



CHIKUNGUNYA

What is Chikungunya?

Chikungunya (CHIK) is caused by the bite of a mosquito infected with the alphavirus CHIKV. The name CHIK is derived from the Kimakonde language meaning “to become contorted” due to the posture of suffering patients. In the past, the only cases of CHIK in the United States were from people who travelled internationally to areas where CHIK was prevalent. However, in recent years locally acquired cases were reported in the U.S, but none have occurred in Delaware. The first confirmed travel-related case of CHIK in Delaware was identified in 2014.

Who gets Chikungunya?

People of all ages can get CHIK if they are exposed to infected mosquitoes. People who travel to areas where CHIK is commonly found – such as Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America – are at increased risk for getting the disease. Severe disease can occur for newborns infected around birth, adults 65 years or older, and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease.

How is Chikungunya spread?

This disease is most often spread to people by CHIKV-infected *Aedes aegypti* (yellow fever mosquito) and *Aedes albopictus* (Asian tiger mosquito) mosquitoes. These mosquitoes bite during the daytime. In the U.S., *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes are not normally found north of the Carolinas, but *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes are found in Delaware.

What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

Most people infected with CHIKV will develop some symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever, joint pain, headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash. Most patients feel better within a week and death from CHIKV is rare. However, severe joint pain can be disabling and may last for months.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The time from mosquito bite to feeling sick ranges from three to seven days.

How is Chikungunya diagnosed?

Health care providers diagnose CHIKV infection based on travel history, symptoms, and blood test results.

Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?

An infected person does not need to be excluded from work or school.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the treatment for Chikungunya?

There is no treatment of CHIK, but there is a vaccine available to prevent disease. Rest, fluids, and over-the-counter pain medications may relieve some symptoms. Do not take aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen or naproxen) until dengue can be ruled out to reduce the risk of bleeding. Also, if you have CHIK, prevent mosquito bites during the first week of illness. During the first week, uninfected mosquitoes can get the virus from your blood and pass it to uninfected people.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Chikungunya?

The most important way to prevent your chances of developing Chikungunya is to prevent mosquito bites. Take these recommended steps:

- Repair any tears or rips in window screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home. Use air conditioning if available.
- Clean leaves and debris from gutters, which can hold water if they are clogged.
- Recycle old tires, which are perfect habitats for mosquito larvae.
- Tip and toss containers that are holding water. Empty water from tarps that are covering items like boats, mulch, dirt, etc.
- Turn containers and wheelbarrows over, so that they cannot collect water.
- Change the water in bird baths.
- Use netting over strollers, playpens, etc.
- Consider using EPA-registered mosquito repellents and apply them according to the product label.
- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- When travelling overseas:
 - Check for CDC travel health notices.
 - Pack EPA-registered mosquito repellents, long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and clothing and gear treated with 0.5% permethrin.
 - Choose lodging with air conditioning and window and door screens.
 - Talk to your health care provider about the chikungunya vaccine. In November 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved IXCHIQ, the first CHIK vaccine. This vaccine is approved for individuals 18 years and older who are at risk of exposure to CHIKV.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/index.html>

Travel Health Notices, <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Food and Drug Administration IXCHIQ Press Release, <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-vaccine-prevent-disease-caused-chikungunya-virus>

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