



# CHIKUNGUNYA FACT SHEET

## What is chikungunya?

- Chikungunya is viral illness disease transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.
- The name comes from a word in the African Kimakonde language and means "bent over in pain". It describes the stooped appearance of persons suffering with severe joint pains.

## What are the symptoms?

- The most common symptoms are high fever and severe joint pains, often hands and feet.
- Other symptoms include headache, muscle pains, joint swelling, nausea, fatigue and rash.
- Symptoms usually last for three to ten days.

## How severe is the disease?

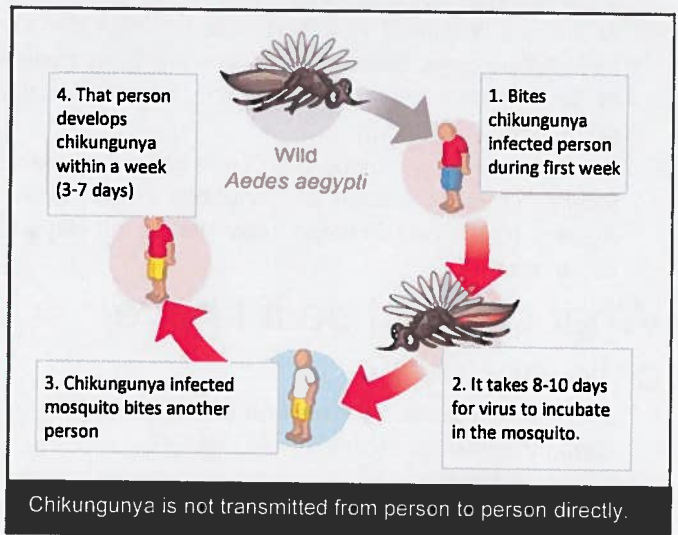
- Most patients feel better within a week.
- Some people may develop longer-term joint pains.
- People at increased risk for severe disease include newborns exposed during delivery, older adults ( $\geq 65$  years), and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease.
- Deaths are rare.

## What is the global, regional and local burden of chikungunya?

- The virus was first detected in Tanzania in 1952.
- Since 2004, intense and extensive outbreaks have been reported in Africa, on islands in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific region, and Southeast Asia (India; Indonesia; Myanmar; Maldives; Sri Lanka and Thailand).
- In December 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the first local transmission of chikungunya virus in the Western Hemisphere identified in Saint Martin.
- It has become a major international public health concern. It is prevalent in several countries in the

Caribbean and Americas. For list of countries please visit [www.carpha.org](http://www.carpha.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

- In June 2014, the first case was confirmed in the Cayman Islands. As of 1 October, 2014, there were 18 confirmed cases (14 imported, 4 local).



## How is chikungunya spread?

- The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito gets infected by biting the chikungunya patient in the first week of illness.
- After about eight to ten days of incubation, the infected mosquito is capable of transmitting the virus for the rest of its life.
- Only the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that has bitten an infected person can pick up the virus and transmit to another person.
- *Aedes aegypti* is a daytime biter, with peak activity in the late afternoon (4 to 6 PM).

## Is chikungunya transmitted from person to person?

- No, the virus cannot be transmitted directly from one person to another.
- It is not transmitted by hugs or kisses, by touch or through the air we breathe.

## How soon do symptoms occur after the bite of an infected mosquito?

- After the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, chikungunya usually develops within three to seven days.
- An infected person can be a source of chikungunya virus for mosquitoes during the first week of illness.

## How is chikungunya diagnosed?

- Doctors suspect the possibility of chikungunya based on clinical symptoms and signs. Chikungunya is suspected when a high fever (40°C) is accompanied by severe joint pains.
- At times it is difficult to differentiate between dengue and chikungunya. Severe joint pains are predominant in chikungunya while muscle and bone pain are predominant in dengue.
- Confirmation is by a blood test. Tests are not available locally. Tests conducted at Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) Trinidad take five to ten days to obtain results.

## What should I do if I have chikungunya?

- There is no specific treatment for chikungunya.
- General measures include:
  - bed rest
  - use of acetaminophen or paracetamol (Panadol or Tylenol) for control of fever and pain relief
  - plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
  - protect yourself from mosquito bites to prevent transmission
- Joint pain is often very debilitating and can last for a few days or may be prolonged, but most people recover without complications.

## Can you get chikungunya twice?

- No, only once. According to evidence, the protective bodies developed provide lifelong immunity.



### For further information:

Contact the Public Health Department 244-2648  
Or visit <http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health-Activities/Chikungunya>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/geo/united-states.html>

## Is there a vaccine against chikungunya?

- There is no vaccine to protect against chikungunya.
- The only protection is to avoid mosquito bites.

## How to reduce the risk of chikungunya infection?

Although local transmission of chikungunya is not fully established in the Cayman Islands, there is always a probability of returning residents or visitors from endemic areas being infected with the chikungunya virus and getting bitten by local mosquitoes. It is also difficult for public to identify the mosquitoes. Hence protect yourself from mosquito bites in general, especially the ones in the late afternoon (4 to 6 PM) that might be *Aedes aegypti*.

**To avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes:** (whether locally or overseas)

- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET on skin and clothing.
- When outdoors during times that mosquitoes are biting, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into socks.
- When indoors, stay in air-conditioned or screened areas.

**To minimize being bitten by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes – eliminate breeding sites:**

- *Aedes aegypti* is referred to as a domestic mosquito because it lives in close association with people. It breeds in and around houses in any container capable of holding rain water. Typical sites where the mosquito larvae can be found include buckets, water drums, flower-pots and any discarded garbage.
- Because the mosquito does not travel far, the most effective way of protecting yourself and your family is by ensuring your yard is maintained free of breeding sites.
- A quick survey of your yard every 4 to 5 days for containers holding water and/or mosquito larvae and emptying them will greatly reduce your chances of being bitten. Emptying the water will kill any larvae. Turning the container upside down will prevent it becoming a breeding site in the future.

### For advice on Mosquito Control

Mosquito Research and Control Unit  
Grand Cayman 949-2557 Cayman Brac 948-2223  
Department of Environmental Health  
Grand Cayman 949-6696 Cayman Brac 948-2321