

Advice to the general public in areas where *Aedes albopictus* or *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes are present

A common effort: Controlling the risk of Chikungunya



Chikungunya is a virus that is transmitted from human to human mainly by infected *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (later referred to as *Aedes* mosquitoes). The virus causes sudden onset of high fever, severe joint pain, muscle pain and headache. While Chikungunya fever is usually non-fatal, a small number of patients may develop serious complications or chronic conditions. As no vaccine or medication is available, it is important to protect yourself from mosquito bites when staying in areas where virus transmission occurs in order to prevent becoming infected with the virus.

How do humans become infected by Chikungunya?

The virus is spread mainly by the bites of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. These mosquito types are characterised by white stripes on their black bodies and legs.

What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

The symptoms of Chikungunya include sudden onset of high fever, severe joint pain, muscle pain and headaches. The symptoms appear on average 4 to 7 days (but can range from 1 to 12 days) after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

While most patients recover after a few days to a couple of weeks, a small number of patients may develop chronic joint pains. Other possible, but rare, complications include gastro-intestinal or cardio-vascular complications.

How is Chikungunya treated?

No vaccine or medication is currently available to prevent or cure the infection; only symptomatic treatment is available.

How can I protect myself from mosquito bites?

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long trousers
- Use mosquito repellents, coils or other devices that will help fend off mosquitoes
- Pregnant women, people with immune disorders or severe chronic illnesses, and children under 12 years should see their doctor to receive personalised recommendations on options for protection

- If possible, set up and sleep under bed nets pre-treated with insecticides
- If possible, set the air-conditioning to a low temperature at night – mosquitoes do not like cold temperatures

What can I do to reduce the spread of the *Aedes* mosquitoes in my community?

Aedes mosquitoes live in a wide range of different environments. The presence of water is of great importance for their breeding as the mosquito eggs require water in order to develop into adult mosquitoes. It is important that everybody takes action to avoid water gathering in containers especially in the vicinity of the house, such as left-over water in flower pots, wading pools, drain pipes and watering cans.

What should I do if I suspect that I have Chikungunya?

If you experience the symptoms described above,

- please see a doctor who can make the correct diagnosis
- protect yourself against further mosquito bites - if you do have Chikungunya, this will help prevent the virus from spreading to others in your community