

Chikungunya

Chikungunya is a viral infection caused by the chikungunya virus (CHIKV) and is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito

Chikungunya is a viral infection caused by the chikungunya virus (CHIKV), an alphavirus which is spread through mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit chikungunya bite during the day, from sunrise to sunset, especially at dawn and dusk. They breed in natural and man-made containers (for example flowerpots and old tyres) and these are a risk factor for transmission if left around human habitation.

Chikungunya was first isolated after an outbreak in Tanzania in the 1950s. It now occurs mainly in tropical and subtropical regions of the world but has also been found in parts of Europe and the USA. The mosquito that transmits chikungunya is found very widely throughout the world and, as a result of infected travellers introducing it into new countries, it has spread very widely and has become a major global health problem.

Chikungunya is an unpleasant disease but is rarely fatal. Symptoms usually start about 4-8 days from a bite by an infected mosquito and include:

- sudden high fever
- severe joint pains (arthralgia) and muscle pains (myalgia)
- headaches
- sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- skin rashes
- some people can be infected with CHIKV without developing symptoms, but this is rare

The symptoms usually improve within 1-2 weeks, but the joint pains can be severe and may persist for months or even years.

Occasional cases of eye, neurological and heart complications have been reported, as well as gastrointestinal complaints.

There is no specific antiviral treatment for chikungunya. Treatment consists of rest, fluids and medicines for pain and fever, such as ibuprofen or paracetamol.

Travellers visiting areas with on-going outbreaks are at risk of being infected with CHIKV. The risk areas are constantly changing and evolving, and travellers should check the latest information on outbreaks before they travel. Outbreaks of chikungunya in new areas are recorded in the Outbreak Surveillance section of our website. Travellers can check whether there is a risk of chikungunya in a country by looking at the 'Other Risks' tab; 'Biting insects or ticks' section of our [Country Information pages](#).

Prevention

Travellers should seek advice from a health professional prior to travel for information on the risk of chikungunya at their destination.

Mosquito [bite avoidance](#) is recommended, particularly during daytime hours.

There are currently no vaccinations (or medications) to prevent chikungunya in the UK.

Resources

- More detailed information can be found in the [Chikungunya Factsheet](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Chikungunya worldwide overview](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency \(formerly Public Health England\): Chikungunya](#)
- [World Health Organization: Chikungunya fact sheet](#)