



## Hawaii State Department of Health

### Disease Investigation Branch

Oahu 586-4586, Maui 984-8213, Hilo 933-0912,

Kona 322-4877, Kauai 241-3563

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## Chikungunya

### What is chikungunya?

Chikungunya is an illness caused by the chikungunya virus, which is transmitted to people by mosquitoes (primarily *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti*); it is not spread person-to-person. Most commonly, it causes fever and joint pain, but can also cause headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, and rash. The majority of cases recover completely in approximately 7–10 days, but some may have persistent joint pain that can last for months. Symptoms can be severe and debilitating, but death from chikungunya is uncommon. Chikungunya virus historically has been found in Africa, Asia, and Europe, and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In 2013, it was identified for the first time in the Americas and has since spread throughout the Caribbean, to South and Central America, and to North America. There has not been a locally acquired case in Hawaii to date, but cases have been imported to Hawaii from travel outside the state.

### How do you get it?

People get chikungunya by being bitten by an infected mosquito. A mosquito can become infected if they feed on someone who is already infected with the virus; then, when the infected mosquito bites a new person, that mosquito can transmit the chikungunya virus to that person. The mosquitoes that spread it most commonly are *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes, which are the same mosquitoes that spread dengue fever. *Aedes*

*albopictus* are widespread throughout Hawaii. Chikungunya does not spread person-to-person, so you cannot get it directly from someone who has been infected.

### What are the symptoms of chikungunya?

The symptoms of chikungunya usually start about 3–7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Most people that become infected do develop symptoms, most commonly fever and severe joint pain in multiple joints. Other symptoms also include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash. Death from chikungunya infection is uncommon.

People generally recover after approximately 7–10 days, however, some people develop joint pain that can last weeks to months

### What is the treatment for chikungunya?

Currently treatment is supportive, and there is no vaccine available to prevent chikungunya infection. People with chikungunya should get plenty of rest and stay hydrated by drinking lots of fluids. Medicines such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or acetaminophen can be used to relieve the symptoms of fever and pain. Individuals with chikungunya should avoid exposure to mosquitoes during their first week of illness to prevent possible transmission of the disease.

## **If you get chikungunya once, can you get it again?**

After someone has been infected by the chikungunya virus, they are likely to be protected from chikungunya infection in the future.

## **Can you get chikungunya in Hawaii?**

Chikungunya is not currently circulating in Hawaii; cases of the disease in Hawaii have all been infected through exposures outside of the state. However, the mosquitoes that are able to carry and spread the disease are present in Hawaii, which means that there is a possibility that it could be introduced to the state by an infected traveler. This is why it is so important that infected individuals avoid mosquito exposure during their first week of illness. The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) promptly investigates all reported cases of chikungunya in order to reduce the possibility of the disease spreading further.

## **How can you keep from getting it?**

The best way to prevent any mosquito-borne infections is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Some steps you can take to prevent mosquito bites include:

- Use screens on windows and doorways to keep mosquitoes out, and if traveling to regions with mosquito-borne diseases, use mosquito netting over beds to keep from being bitten while sleeping.
- Use insect repellents to keep mosquitoes away. Repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and para-menthane-diol products will provide long lasting protection against mosquitoes. Repellents that contain a higher concentration of the active ingredients will generally provide longer-lasting protection. Always use the repellent

according to the instructions on the product label.

- Wear appropriate clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and long pants to reduce the likelihood of mosquito bites.
- Reduce the number of mosquitoes outside homes by removing any standing water from containers such as flowerpots or buckets.

If you are going to be traveling, check before leaving if there is a risk of chikungunya at your destination, and if so, be sure to take precautions against mosquito bites. One source of travel health information is [CDC's Traveler's Health website](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

**For more information, see CDC's website at:**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/index.html>