



CHIKUNGUNYA

WHAT IS CHIKUNGUNYA?

Chikungunya fever is a mosquito transmitted viral disease that was first discovered in Tanzania in 1953 and has since been the cause of numerous epidemics in Africa, Asia and areas of Europe.

The word chikungunya is derived from an African dialect and means 'to become contorted'. It aptly describes the stooped appearance of sufferers experiencing one of its main symptoms – excruciating joint pain. Humans become infected with the virus by the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito; an aggressive daytime-feeder which is attracted to humans.

SYMPTOMS

Chikungunya is most often characterised by fever, headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, muscle pain, rash and joint pain and can be quite debilitating.

It is thought that once someone has had chikungunya fever that it confers life-long immunity. Acute chikungunya typically lasts a few days to a couple of weeks, but as with some other mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue and West Nile fever, some persons have prolonged fatigue lasting several weeks. Others have reported incapacitating joint pain, or arthritis which may continue for weeks or months.

PREVENTION

There are no vaccines or drugs to prevent chikungunya. The best way for travellers to prevent infection is to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

- Minimise the amount of skin exposed, long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks should be worn as much as possible
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin or Citriodiol (PMD) to exposed skin
- Stay in well-screened or air conditioned areas

TREATMENT

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for chikungunya. The treatment is usually supportive. Rest, fluids, and medications such as paracetamol to relieve symptoms of fever and aching.

Fatalities related to the chikungunya virus are rare and appear to be associated with increased age.

More information on Chikungunya is available during your pre-travel consultation with Travelvax. Call 1300 360 164 for the location of the clinic nearest to you.