

Chikungunya

Information Sheet

Population Health Hawke's Bay District Health Board | 76 Wellesley Road, PO Box 447, Napier
Phone: 06 834 1815 | **Fax:** 06 834 1816 | www.hawkesbay.health.nz

What is it?

Chikungunya is a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The type of mosquito that spreads this virus is not normally found in New Zealand, but it is found in many other countries. Other infections spread by mosquito bites are listed at the end of this information sheet. Chikungunya is pronounced "chicken-goon-ya".

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people infected with Chikungunya feel unwell. Symptoms start 1 to 12 days after a mosquito bite.

Symptoms include:

- high fever
- painful joints, often in the hands and feet, which may be swollen
- headache
- muscle ache
- red eyes
- vomiting
- rash.

If you have any of these symptoms and you have recently travelled overseas you should see a doctor, and tell them where you have been. You may need to have blood tests. The disease has similar symptoms to Dengue Fever (another viral disease spread by mosquitoes) and can be misdiagnosed in areas where dengue is common. Dengue is pronounced "den-gay".

How serious is it?

People with Chikungunya often have very painful joints, which can last for weeks to months. Other symptoms are usually not serious, and last for 7 to 10 days. The disease can be more serious in babies and elderly people.

Chikungunya is a notifiable disease under the Health Act. This means your doctor must tell the District Health Board (DHB) if you have it.

Who is most at risk?

Chikungunya is not currently transmitted by mosquitoes in New Zealand. All cases of Chikungunya in New Zealand have been in people that have recently travelled to other countries. The virus can be found in many other parts of the world including Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands and Americas.

How could I get infected?

You can be infected through a bite from a type of mosquito which are not normally found in New Zealand. If you travel to an area with this type of mosquito, you could be infected. Chikungunya cannot spread directly from person to person.

How do I protect myself and others?

There is no vaccine to prevent Chikungunya. If you are travelling overseas, check with your doctor for the most up-to-date list of countries with Chikungunya. Because it is spread by mosquitoes, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten.

- Use insect repellent, and check the label to make sure they contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535.
- Cover as much of your body as possible with long, light-coloured clothing.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.

- Use clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) that has been treated with the insecticide permethrin.

Chikungunya cannot spread from person to person, you can only be infected by an infected mosquito.

Will I need to take time off work, school or preschool?

This will depend on how unwell you feel. Ask your doctor about this.

How is it treated?

There are no particular medicines for Chikungunya. If you have Chikungunya you should get plenty of rest, drink enough water, and take paracetamol for pain and fever.

If your symptoms are bad or you get dehydrated you may need to go to hospital.

What are other diseases spread by mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes can give you Murray Valley encephalitis, Kunjin, Kokobera, Japanese encephalitis, West Nile virus, Ross River, Barmah Forest, Sindbis, Dengue Fever and Zika. None of these diseases are currently found in mosquitoes in New Zealand. They are all spread by infected mosquitoes overseas, and cause similar symptoms to Chikungunya. More information about Zika Virus and Dengue Fever can be found in our other information sheets.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on Chikungunya or other diseases spread by mosquitoes please contact your doctor or Hawke's Bay District Health Board Population Health on (06) 834 1815. You can also phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 at any time of the day or night to speak to a registered nurse.

You can also find more information on these websites:

- www.cdc.gov/chikungunya
- www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs327