



Ministry of Health

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CHIKUNGUNYA

1. What is Chikungunya?

Chikungunya fever is an emerging mosquito-borne disease caused by an alphavirus, Chikungunya virus. The disease is transmitted by the bite of an *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus* mosquito. CHIKV is spread when the female *Aedes* mosquito bites an infected person and then bites other people.

2. Does Jamaica have both the *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes?

No. There are NO *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in Jamaica at this time. *Aedes aegypti*, however, is endemic to Jamaica and is the same mosquito that transmits the dengue fever virus.

3. How does the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito operate?

The *Aedes aegypti* is a day biting mosquito that will almost always be found in and around homes, schools, workplaces, and other places where people gather. The mosquito breeds in any type of container where water is allowed to settle. The most common breeding sites are drums, tyres and containers in and around the home, school, workplace and communities.

4. What are the symptoms of Chikungunya?

The most common symptoms of Chikungunya are:

- high fever
- severe joint pains
- backache
- headache
- muscle pain
- rash

Although it does not often result in death, joint pains and stiffness can last for months and even years. It may become a source of chronic pain and disability resulting in the individual being unable to attend work or school.

5. How soon after being bitten by the infected mosquito will I experience symptoms?

Symptoms are usually experienced 3 to 7 days after being bitten by the infected mosquito. However, the symptoms can be seen as soon as 1 day after the bite or as long as 12 days after the bite.

6. Who is at risk for more severe symptoms?

- Infants
- The elderly
- Women in an advanced stage of pregnancy
- Persons with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes and hypertension

7. What is the treatment for Chikungunya?

There is no specific medication for the treatment of Chikungunya virus. Pain killers can be taken to reduce the fever and pain. However, only Paracetamol pain killers should be used. **DO NOT TAKE** pain killers such as aspirin, ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs.

Persons who think they have Chikungunya should report to their doctor or nearest health centre. Persons should also rest, drink plenty of fluids, and avoid mosquito bites.

8. What can be done to reduce the risk of getting Chikungunya?

There is no vaccine to prevent Chikungunya. The best prevention is to:

A. Reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding sites as follows:

- Check yard weekly for water-filled containers.

- Throw away or recycle water containers that are not needed
- Large containers such as drums or old appliances must be stored, covered, turned over or placed under a roof that does not allow them to fill with water
- Clean and scrub flower vases and pet's water containers weekly and dump the water from overflow saucers under potted plants and flower pots.
- Check that gutters are not holding water
- Fill tree holes and other cavities in plants with soil or sand
- Check for hidden bodies of water such as clogged drains, wells, septic tanks, manholes etc.

B. Protect yourself from mosquito bites by using a mosquito repellent that contains DEET, sleep under a mosquito net, wear light coloured clothing and cover body as much as possible.

9. Since there is no vaccine against Chikungunya, what should I do if I travel to a country where there is Chikungunya?

You should take the necessary measures to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

10. What actions are being taken by the Ministry of Health to address Chikungunya?

The Ministry has intensified its surveillance system to allow quick detection of cases, trained its staff islandwide, strengthened its vector control programme and initiated communication with key partners and stakeholders in executing a multi-sectoral approach to preventing and controlling Chikungunya.

11. How can individuals /communities help prevent Chikungunya?

Mosquito breeding prevention is everybody's business. You can do your part to prevent mosquito breeding:

- Organize cleanup activities in your communities

- Identify, eliminate or report mosquito breeding sites
- Ensure your household is free from mosquito breeding sites
- See your doctor immediately if you think you or a family member might have Chikungunya

12. Where can I get more information on Chikungunya?

You can call the Toll Free line, 1-888- ONE LOVE (1-888-663-5683) or contact your Parish Health Department, for more inform