

Chikungunya virus



Chikungunya is an infection in humans caused by the chikungunya virus.

The chikungunya virus is present in Africa, southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Indian Ocean islands, where a number of outbreaks have occurred.



Chikungunya virus infection is a notifiable condition¹

How chikungunya is spread

Humans and other primates are the natural hosts for the chikungunya virus. The virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected female *Aedes* species mosquito – *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus*. These are the same tropical and sub-tropical mosquitoes that carry the dengue virus. They breed in or near human habitations and prefer to feed on humans during the daytime in shady areas, but may also bite early in the night.

In Australia, *Aedes aegypti* currently is found in north Queensland while *Aedes albopictus* is found in a few locations in the Torres Strait. Infections reported in Australia are from people who have travelled overseas to regions where the chikungunya virus is present.

To date chikungunya virus infection has not been transmitted by mosquitoes in Australia. However, since the mosquitoes capable of transmitting the infection are found in northern Australia there is the potential for this to occur.

Signs and symptoms

Chikungunya infection is characterised by sudden onset of:

- > high fever
- > severe joint pain mainly in the arms and legs
- > headache
- > muscle pain
- > back pain
- > rash (about 50% of affected people).

Most people start to feel better after 7 to 10 days although some people will develop longer term joint pain.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis is based on signs and symptoms and confirmed with a blood test.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

Typically 3 to 7 days with a range of 1 to 12 days.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

Chikungunya cannot be spread directly from person to person.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for chikungunya infection. The use of pain medication and rest can provide relief for some of the symptoms.

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Prevention

- > Exclusion from childcare, preschool, school or work is not necessary but infected people should avoid being bitten by mosquitoes while they are unwell.
- > There is no vaccine to prevent infection.
- > Personal protection and the environmental management of mosquitoes are important in preventing illness. See Fight the Bite for tips how to protect yourself and your family from mosquito borne diseases.

Useful links

Fight the bite website www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/fightthebite

> Avoiding mosquito bites

SA Health website www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

- > Barmah Forest virus infection
- > Dengue fever
- > Japanese encephalitis
- > Kunjin/West Nile virus infection
- > Malaria
- > Murray Valley encephalitis
- > Overseas travel
- > Ross River virus infection
- > Yellow fever

Centres for Disease Control, United States of America www.cdc.gov/chikungunya

¹ In South Australia the law requires doctors and laboratories to report some infections or diseases to SA Health. These infections or diseases are commonly referred to as 'notifiable conditions'.

You've Got What? 5th Edition

Communicable Disease Control Branch

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The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat



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