



Press Release

First Case of Chikungunya Confirmed in North Carolina, Associated with Caribbean Travel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 12, 2014

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Raleigh, N.C. - North Carolina's first case of chikungunya was confirmed in a resident who recently travelled to the Caribbean. Chikungunya virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, and the Asian Tiger mosquito that is commonly found in North Carolina could effectively transmit this virus. At this time, there have not been any cases of the disease known to have been acquired in North Carolina or the continental United States.

Symptoms of chikungunya usually begin three to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms typically include the sudden onset of fever and severe, often disabling, joint pains in the hands and feet. Many patients feel better within a week; however, the joint pain may persist for months in some people. Newborns exposed during delivery, adults over 65 years and people with chronic medical conditions have a greater risk for a severe form of the disease.

Prior to its introduction in the Caribbean, chikungunya was established in East Africa, India, the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific regions. It was introduced in the Caribbean in December 2013 through travelers returning from affected areas. As of June 6, chikungunya has caused illness in over 130,000 persons in the Caribbean.

DHHS' Division of Public Health advises persons traveling to countries where chikungunya transmission is occurring to:

- Take personal precautions to prevent mosquito bites; and
- Immediately consult a medical provider if they develop fever in the two weeks after their return home.

"With North Carolina residents traveling to and from the Caribbean and other affected areas, we have been monitoring for possible imported cases," said Dr. Megan Davies, DHHS' State Epidemiologist. "Anyone experiencing symptoms of chikungunya should contact a physician and minimize exposure to mosquitoes to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to others. Travelers who visit countries where chikungunya is widespread should take extra precaution against mosquito bites."

To protect yourself and your family against mosquito bites:

- Wear light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Reduce time spent outdoors, particularly during early morning and early evening hours when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply EPA-approved mosquito repellents such as DEET, picardin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 to exposed skin areas. Always follow [guidelines](#) when using mosquito repellent.
- Since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, spray clothes with repellent containing permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent will give extra protection.

DHHS' Division of Public Health strongly recommends that all North Carolina residents take measures to decrease environmental conditions favorable to breeding for the species that could transmit this infection, the Asian Tiger mosquito. This mosquito is an aggressive daytime biter, breeds in small water containers and does not travel long distances. To reduce mosquito breeding areas around your home:

- Remove any containers that can hold water;
- Change the water in bird baths and pet bowls frequently and repair leaky outdoor faucets;
- Cover rain barrels with tight-fitting screens or lids;
- Keep gutters clean and in good repair; and
- Use screened windows and doors and make sure screens are not torn and fit tightly.

[Click here for frequently asked questions on chikungunya](#)

To learn more about chikungunya virus, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>

To learn more about chikungunya and its introduction into the Americas, please visit: http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9053&Itemid=39843

To learn more about how to prevent mosquito bites, please visit: <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/arbo/prevent.html>

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