For Immediate Release
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Travelers to the Caribbean are Urged to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites

(Little Rock) The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) warns individuals and groups traveling to the Caribbean to take steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites. In December 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported local transmission of chikungunya (pronunciation: chik-en-gun-ya) in Saint Martin. Local transmission means that mosquitoes in the area have been infected with chikungunya and are spreading it to people. This is the first time that local transmission of chikungunya has been reported in the Americas.

Local transmission of chikungunya is now being reported in other countries in the Caribbean. As of June 4, 2014, the following Caribbean countries have reported cases of chikungunya:

- Anguilla
- Antigua
- British Virgin Islands
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- French Guiana
- Guadeloupe
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Martinique
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Barthelemy
- Saint Kitts
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Martin (French)
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Sint Maarten (Dutch)

Travelers who go to these islands in the Caribbean are at risk of getting chikungunya. In addition, travelers to Africa, Asia, and islands in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific are also at risk, as the virus is present in many of these areas. The mosquito that carries chikungunya virus can bite during the day and night, both indoors and outdoors, and often lives around buildings in urban areas.
“Chikungunya is an illness caused by a virus that spreads through mosquito bites. The most common symptoms of chikungunya are fever and joint pain. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash,” according to Dr. Haselow, State Epidemiologist.

The best way to protect yourself and your family continued Haselow “is to take steps to prevent mosquito bites.”

These measures will also protect you from other mosquito borne infections like yellow fever, malaria, west nile, and others.

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use insect repellent with the active ingredient DEET when you go outdoors.
- Always follow product directions and reapply as directed:
  - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
  - Follow package directions when applying repellant on children. Repellents used on children should be less than 30 % DEET. No DEET-containing repellent should be used on children less than two months of age. Avoid applying repellent to their hands, eyes, and mouth.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself:
  - Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See the product information to find out how long the protection will last.
  - If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
  - Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- Stay and sleep in screened or air conditioned rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.

If you have traveled to any of these areas and feel seriously ill talk to your doctor, especially if you have a fever, recommended Haselow.

  - Tell them about your travel.
  - For more information about medical care abroad, see [Getting Health Care Abroad](#)

Currently, there is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment available for chikungunya fever. It is rarely fatal. Treatment is symptomatic and includes rest, fluids, and medicines to relieve symptoms of fever and pain such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs including: ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen or paracetamol. Aspirin should be avoided. Infected persons should be protected from further mosquito exposure (staying indoors in areas with screens and/or under a mosquito net) during the first few days of the illness so they can not contribute to ongoing transmission.

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