



**Texas Department of State Health Services
Health Service Region 2/3
1301 S. Bowen Road
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**Texas Confirms First Chikungunya Virus Case in Central Texas Travelers
Following Caribbean Trips with Faith-based Organizations
July 11, 2014**

As indicated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) news release shown below, some travelers to the Caribbean are returning to the U.S. with chikungunya virus (CHIK) infections. This virus and another mosquito-transmitted virus called dengue pose a threat to travelers in the Caribbean as well as El Salvador, Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana. The list of countries in the Americas with local transmission of CHIK is expected to grow. As you know, many churches and other faith-based organizations arrange mission trips to affected areas. Consequently, DSHS urges you to assure that your members and mission participants are aware of the risk of contracting CHIK and/or dengue during their stay.

Precautions to avoid mosquito bites are listed in the news release and should be followed as feasible. CHIK is not circulating in the U.S. at this time, but the risk of establishing ongoing local transmission in Texas exists; we have mosquitos capable of transmitting both CHIK and dengue. Consequently, mosquito bite avoidance is very important, especially during the first seven days back, since even infected people who have no symptoms will have virus in their blood during that time and can be a source of the virus for local mosquitos.

The period from being bitten by an infected mosquito to the onset of illness ranges from 1-12 days (usually 3-7). If a traveler becomes ill 12 days or less following return to the U.S., medical care should be sought, and travel history should be revealed to the provider. The provider can get information on laboratory testing from the Local Health Department. The patient should avoid mosquito bite for the first seven days of illness for the reason described above.

Please remember that we have mosquito-borne viral diseases in the U.S., most notably West Nile virus. Consequently, mosquito bite avoidance should be an ongoing effort whether at home or abroad as long as mosquitos are active.



DSHS News Release:

July 7, 2014

Texas Confirms State's First Chikungunya Case

The Texas Department of State Health Services has confirmed the state's first human case of chikungunya, a viral disease that can cause fever and severe joint pain and is spread to people by mosquitoes.

The patient recently returned to Texas from a trip to the Caribbean where chikungunya has been causing human disease since late 2013. To date, no local spread of the virus has been reported in the continental United States, though imported cases make local spread possible because the mosquitoes that can transmit the virus are found in Texas. The Texas case is a Williamson County resident. Chikungunya is not transmitted from direct person to person contact, but a person with the disease can be the source of the virus for mosquitoes that can then transmit the virus to others through a bite. To prevent the spread of the disease, people with chikungunya illness should be especially careful to avoid exposure to mosquitoes during the first week of illness.

Infections are rarely fatal but can cause severe joint pain, high fever, head and muscle aches, joint swelling and rash. Symptoms usually begin three to seven days after being bitten by a mosquito. There is no vaccine or treatment for the virus. Most people feel better within a week, though some people may develop longer-term joint pain.

DSHS encourages people to protect themselves from mosquito bites at home and while traveling. The Aedes mosquitoes that transmit chikungunya are active and bite during the day. Precautions include:

- * Use an approved insect repellent every time you go outside, and follow label instructions.
- * Drain standing water where mosquitoes can breed.
- * Wear long sleeves and pants when outside.
- * Use air conditioning or make sure doors and windows are screened to keep mosquitoes outside.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with recent outbreaks in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the number of chikungunya cases among travelers visiting or returning to the United States from affected areas will likely increase. Cases have occurred in Africa, Southern Europe, Southeast Asia, and islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Because the symptoms are similar, DSHS encourages physicians to consider both chikungunya and dengue infection in patients with acute onset of fever and joint pain and who have recently visited areas where at least one of the viruses is present.

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