

CHIKUNGUNYA GUIDELINES FOR CRUISE SHIPS COMING TO THE CARIBBEAN

November 12, 2014

This document provides information on Chikungunya (CHIKV) prevention and preparedness for cruise ships coming to the Caribbean. This information is based on currently available scientific evidence and has been adapted and prepared for the Caribbean situation.

Background

Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne viral infection. Outbreaks have previously occurred in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans.¹ Local transmission of the infection was found for the first time in the Caribbean in December 2013. Since CHIKV is new to the Caribbean, almost everyone in the Caribbean is susceptible to the infection and, as a result, CHIKV has now reached epidemic levels in many countries throughout the Caribbean. As of November 7, 2014 a total of 16,280 confirmed/probable cases and 760,791 suspect cases of CHIKV have been reported across the Caribbean region. CARPHA CHIKV updates can be found on the CARPHA website at: <http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health-Activities/Chikungunya>

What is Chikungunya?

In the Caribbean CHIKV is transmitted through the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue virus. This mosquito prefers to feed during the daytime, but will feed indoors in the evening if the lights are on.

Symptoms of CHIKV may appear from 1-12 days (average 3-7 days) after being bitten by an infected mosquito.² Primary symptoms may include an abrupt onset of fever frequently accompanied by joint pain. Other common signs and symptoms may include: muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rash.³ Joint pain usually only lasts for a few days, but the pain may occur intermittently for weeks, and in some cases, several month or years.³ Symptoms in many individuals are mild and may go unrecognized. In areas where dengue is endemic, CHIKV may be misdiagnosed as dengue.

CHIKV can NOT be transmitted by close or casual contact with an infected person (i.e., not person to person) or through the air, food or water. Infection with CHIKV is thought to provide lifelong immunity, so reinfection is unlikely. However, symptom relapse can occur in some individuals, most often 2-3 months after the initial infection.

What can Cruise Ships coming to the Caribbean do to Prevent and Prepare for Chikungunya?

There is no vaccine or treatment available for CHIKV, so prevention measures are essential.

- Stay informed about the CHIKV situation in the countries on the itinerary.
- Provide passengers and crew with prepared materials on CHIKV so that they are aware of the signs and symptoms, how CHIKV is transmitted and how it can be prevented.
- Have insect repellent available for purchase on board the ship.

Note: CARPHA will continue to evaluate new information as it becomes available, and will update this guidance as needed.

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Chikungunya virus. Modified October 7, 2014. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>
2. Deilgat M, Geduld J, Drebot M. Chikungunya outbreak in the Caribbean 2013-2014. CCDR 40-2;2014. Available from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/14vol40/dr-rm40-02/dr-rm40-02-chik-eng.php>
3. World Health Organization. Chikungunya. Modified October, 2014. Available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs327/en/>