

Travellers reminded to protect themselves against mosquito bites

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New UKHSA data shows dengue cases have fallen significantly, but chikungunya infections rose 43% in 2025 and malaria continues to be reported at consistently high levels among returning travellers.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is reminding people to take precautions against mosquito-borne infections during the upcoming Easter break and spring travel period. While the latest data brings positive news on dengue, with cases falling significantly in 2025, travel-associated chikungunya cases in England are at their highest point in more than a decade and malaria case numbers in returning travellers remained at a high level.

The latest UKHSA Travel-associated Infections Report published today, shows that a total of 160 chikungunya cases were reported in 2025, the highest annual total recorded since 2014. This is a 43% increase compared to 2024 when 112 cases were reported. With most infections in 2025 reported between April and September, the data highlights the importance of protecting yourself against biting insects during Easter and spring travel breaks abroad.

Of the 160 chikungunya cases, 159 were reported in England and one in Wales. The largest proportion of cases were reported in London (56%), consistent with previous years. All infections were travel-associated, with the majority linked to Sri Lanka (75 cases), India (17 cases) and Bangladesh (16 cases). This finding is consistent with the global picture, with WHO reporting several significant chikungunya outbreaks globally in 2025, including large outbreaks in countries across the Indian Ocean region.

Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne infection associated with overseas travel, with key symptoms including a sudden onset of fever usually accompanied by joint pain. While most people recover fully within 1 to 2 weeks, the joint pain can persist for months or even years. Up to 12% of patients still experience discomfort 3 years after infection. Serious complications are uncommon, but very rarely the disease can be fatal, with the very young, older adults and those with other underlying illnesses at greatest risk.

Chikungunya is mainly spread by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These mosquitoes are currently not established in the UK as our climate is generally not suitable for their survival and breeding. Therefore, there is currently no risk of onward transmission of chikungunya in the UK.

There are two chikungunya vaccines that have recently been approved for use in the UK. They are available privately from travel clinics, following an assessment by a healthcare professional.

Dr Philip Veal, Consultant in Public Health at UKHSA, said:

For some people chikungunya can be a prolonged and nasty disease and we continue to see cases in travellers returning to the UK, particularly from parts of Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

While this mosquito-borne infection is rarely fatal, it can cause severe joint and muscle pain, headaches, sensitivity to light and skin rashes. Thankfully, symptoms usually

improve within a few weeks, but joint pain may last for months or longer. So, it is essential to take precautions against mosquito bites when travelling.

Dr Dipti Patel, Director, National Travel Health Network and Centre, said:

If you're travelling over Easter or spring, it's important that you prepare before you travel, and take precautions against mosquito bites. Simple steps such as using a DEET based insect repellent, covering-up your skin and sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets, can greatly reduce the risk. Before you travel, check the Travel Health Pro website for the latest advice on your destination. If chikungunya is a risk at your destination, you may wish to discuss the suitability of chikungunya vaccination with a travel health clinic.

UKHSA has also published provisional data today that shows imported malaria cases consistently remain at high levels in the UK, despite a decrease in diagnoses to 1,629 in 2025 from 1,812 in 2024. Most cases were reported during the late spring and summer travel months between May and October. Malaria is potentially fatal but almost entirely preventable when prevention measures such as antimalarial tablets are taken correctly. UK travellers are reminded to seek and follow travel advice for their destination, which may include antimalarials and mosquito bite avoidance measures.

Today's Report also shows:

Oropouche virus disease was reported in returning travellers for the first time in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2025, with three imported cases linked to travel to Brazil.

A significant reduction in dengue cases, with infections decreasing to 344 in 2025 from 904 in 2024, with India, Thailand and Indonesia the most frequently reported travel destinations. These trends reflect a broader global reduction in dengue transmission in 2025, following exceptionally high levels seen in 2024.

There were 14 cases of cholera recorded in 2025, from 9 cases in 2024. 13 cases were travel-related and one case became ill after consuming water from an endemic country. The main travel destinations reported were Pakistan, India and Ethiopia.

Zika virus disease cases also decreased to 7 in 2025, down from 16 in 2024. Travel history was known for all cases, with India and Thailand being the most frequently reported travel destination.

In countries with insects that spread diseases like malaria, dengue and Zika virus disease, travellers can protect themselves by using insect repellent, covering exposed skin, and sleeping under a treated bed net.

For more information, travellers are strongly advised to visit the Travel Health Pro website, supported by UKHSA, and check the country information page for specific recommendations for their destination. This provides comprehensive information on health risks in countries across the world and is an essential source for planning a trip abroad safely. Travellers should ideally consult their general practice, pharmacist, or travel clinic 4 to 6 weeks before travel for individual advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/travellers-reminded-to-protect-themselves-against-mosquito-bites>