

Chikungunya Recovery and Red-Flag Checklist

Know the warning signs, use medicines safely, and track your recovery from day 1 to month 3.

Read this first: this checklist is general information, not a diagnosis. If you are worried, call NHS 111 or your GP. In an emergency call 999 (or the local emergency number if you are abroad). Tell your clinician where you have travelled.

GET URGENT HELP IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE

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| ☐ Severe tummy (abdominal) pain | ☐ Vomiting 3 or more times in 24 hours |
| ☐ Bleeding from the gums or nose | ☐ Vomiting blood, or blood in your stools |
| ☐ Signs of dehydration | ☐ A newborn or baby who is unwell |

Warning signs can appear as the fever settles. The NHS says serious dengue symptoms can start 24 to 48 hours after your temperature returns to normal. Because dengue and chikungunya are hard to tell apart at home, treat these signs seriously.

Seek advice early if you are 65 or older, have diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease, are pregnant, or are caring for a young child. These groups can become more seriously ill.

Safe-medicine reminders

Medicine	Status	What to know
Paracetamol (acetaminophen)	Usual first choice	Follow the packet or your pharmacist's advice. This checklist gives no doses because they depend on age, weight and other medicines.
Aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen	Avoid until dengue is ruled out	Unless a clinician says it is safe. They can raise bleeding risk if the illness is dengue. For children, avoid ibuprofen unless a doctor approves.
Steroids, anti-inflammatory tablets, methotrexate and similar drugs	Specialist decision	Sometimes used for stubborn joint pain once dengue is excluded. Never start these on your own.

Before you take any medicine:

- ☐ Dengue has been ruled out, or a clinician has said the medicine is safe for me
- ☐ I have read the label and not taken more than it allows
- ☐ I have asked a pharmacist if I take other medicines, am pregnant, or am giving it to a child

What to tell your doctor

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Where and when you travelled, or local cases nearby | ☐ The date your fever and joint pain started |
| ☐ All symptoms, including any rash and when it appeared | ☐ Every medicine you have taken, with times |
| ☐ If you are pregnant, or have diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease | ☐ Any mosquito bites you remember |

Dengue or chikungunya? Clues, not a diagnosis

Both viruses are spread by the same mosquitoes and look similar early on. Only a blood test can tell them apart, so do not guess. These are patterns seen in outbreak studies:

Clue	More typical of chikungunya	More typical of dengue
Joint pain	Prominent, often several joints	Less prominent
Rash	More common	Less common
Eye pain, vomiting	Less common	More common
Platelets (clotting blood cells)	Less often low	More often low
Serious warning signs	Less frequent	More frequent

Your recovery map

Most people improve within 1 to 2 weeks, but joint pain can last for months or even years. Guidelines draw the stage lines slightly differently.

Stage	Typical timing	Tick off
Acute fever, rash, intense joint pain	First 7 to 10 days	☐ Rest ☐ Drink small, frequent sips ☐ Paracetamol only, per the label ☐ Avoid new mosquito bites ☐ Fill in the symptom tracker (page 3)
Lingering (subacute) joint pain and stiffness continue	About 2 to 3 weeks up to 3 months (cut-offs vary)	☐ See a doctor if pain lasts beyond a few weeks ☐ Ask about physical therapy ☐ Keep tracking pain and sleep
Chronic persistent or recurring joint pain or arthritis	More than 3 months	☐ Ask your GP about a rheumatologist (joint specialist) ☐ Bring your tracker to appointments ☐ Ask about treatment options and trials

Avoid more mosquito bites

In the first week the virus is in your blood, so mosquitoes that bite you can become infected and pass it on.

- ☐ Use insect repellent (50% DEET is the most effective option, per TravelHealthPro)
- ☐ Sleep under a net or behind screens
- ☐ Wear long sleeves and trousers
- ☐ Remove standing water near your home

14-day symptom tracker

Fill this in daily and bring it to appointments. **Joint pain score:** 0 = none, 10 = worst pain. If a red-flag sign appears, do not wait to finish the tracker: get help (page 1).

Day	Date	Fever? Highest temp.	Joint pain (0-10)	Rash? Where	Fluids and eating	Medicine (name, time)	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
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10							
11							
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Sources: CDC chikungunya symptoms and treatment pages (cdc.gov/chikungunya) and CDC Yellow Book; NHS dengue (nhs.uk/conditions/dengue); Mayo Clinic, 'What is chikungunya fever?'; TravelHealthPro, 'Chikungunya vaccination information' (travelhealthpro.org.uk); WHO AFRO chikungunya page; KidsHealth chikungunya page. Read the full guide: thehealthrangers.com/chikungunya-symptoms-and-treatment/