

Haiti offers treatment as virus outbreak surges

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Haitian health authorities will distribute pain medication to clinics around the country amid a surge in suspected cases of a mosquito-borne virus that is new to the region, a government official said Friday.

More than 5,500 suspected cases of the [chikungunya virus](#) have been reported in Haiti, up from 1,500 cases a week earlier, Public Health Minister Florence Guillaume said.

The outbreak has been spreading around the Caribbean since the first known locally transmitted case was reported in French St. Martin in December. There have been more than 55,000 suspected and confirmed cases in the region.

There is no vaccine for chikungunya and the primary treatment is [pain medication](#) for the [high fever](#) and arthritis-like ache in the joints that are symptoms of the illness.

Guillaume said in an interview on Radio Caribe that the government has 400,000 doses of acetaminophen to distribute and that any people who believe they have the virus can be treated at no cost. She urged anyone who has had a fever lasting more than 72 hours to seek medical attention.

The illness is rarely fatal though there have been deaths associated with chikungunya among people who are elderly or who have an underlying medical condition.

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