

## Zika Virus Infection

### What is Zika virus infection?

Zika virus infection is a viral disease spread to people through bites of infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on infected persons. Zika virus is transmitted primarily by *Aedes aegypti* (Yellow fever mosquito). *Aedes albopictus* (Asian tiger mosquito) can also spread the virus.

### Where does Zika virus occur?

Outbreaks of Zika virus infection have occurred in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Central America, South America, the Caribbean and Mexico. For a map, see <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>. Because the mosquitoes that spread the virus are found around the world, it is likely that outbreaks will spread to new countries.

### Who gets Zika virus infection?

Anyone traveling to an area where Zika virus is found can become infected. Infections have been reported in travelers returning to the U.S. from affected areas. Those who do not travel to affected areas are not currently at risk of becoming infected because local spread in the continental U.S. has not been reported.

### What are the symptoms of Zika virus infections?

About 80% of people who are infected do not become sick. For the 20% who do become sick, the most common symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild and the symptoms typically last several days to a week.

### How soon do symptoms occur?

Symptoms usually start 3-7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

### How dangerous is Zika virus infection?

During the 2015–2016 outbreak of Zika virus infection in Brazil, a large increase in the number of babies born with a congenital birth defect called microcephaly was observed. Microcephaly describes a baby or child with a smaller than normal brain and head. Studies are being done to see if the increase in reports of babies with microcephaly is because of an infection with Zika virus. Other causes are also being investigated. In other past Zika virus outbreaks, there have been reports of neurologic syndromes, such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome, in a small number of patients.

### What special precautions should pregnant women take to prevent Zika virus?

The role of Zika virus infections during pregnancy is being studied. Out of an abundance of caution, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that pregnant women avoid traveling to countries with ongoing Zika virus infections. If pregnant women need to travel to a country with Zika virus, it is recommended they take the following steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Choose an EPA-registered insect repellent and use according to the product label. Use the repellent day and night because the mosquito species that transmit Zika virus are daytime biters that will also enter buildings and bite at night
- Use permethrin-treated clothing
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long sleeves, pants, and hats
- Sleep indoors in rooms screened windows or air-conditioning, or use a bed net if you sleep in a room that is exposed to the outdoors

#### **How is Zika virus spread?**

Zika virus is mainly spread in a person-to-mosquito-to-person cycle. An infected mosquito bites a person. The person infected by the mosquito will have Zika virus in their blood, especially in the first week of illness. Another mosquito bites that infected person, becomes infected and can then bite another person. People who are infected but who are not sick may still pass the virus on to mosquitoes that bite them. Zika virus can also spread from mother to baby during pregnancy or during the time of birth.

#### **What is the treatment for Zika virus infection?**

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus infection. Healthcare providers primarily provide supportive care to relieve symptoms. This may include rest, fluids, and use of over-the-counter medicine. Infected people should also stay indoors or wear protective clothing and mosquito repellent for the first week after they begin to feel sick. This will help prevent mosquitoes from biting them and potentially spreading the virus to others in the community.

#### **How can a Zika virus infection be prevented?**

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus infection. Infections can be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites. This includes wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks, using insect repellent or permethrin-treated clothing (especially during the daytime when mosquitos are active), using air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitos outside, and eliminating standing water from containers in yards (including bird baths, flower pots, buckets) to stop mosquito breeding.

#### **What should I do if I think I have Zika virus infection?**

If you have symptoms of Zika virus infection and have been to an affected area in the past two weeks, contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may test your blood for Zika virus and other similar mosquito-borne illnesses.

#### **Where can I get more information?**

For additional information, please visit the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>. You may also call your local health department. A directory of local health departments can be found at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm>. If you have questions about mosquito control programs, you may also contact the Virginia Mosquito Control Association <http://www.mosquito-va.org/contact.htm>.