

Zika

What is Zika?

Zika is a viral disease caused by the Zika virus that causes flu-like and other symptoms. It is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito and can also be spread sexually.

Where does Zika occur?

Zika occurs in many tropical and sub-tropical areas of the world, particularly in Africa, Southeast Asia, and islands in the Pacific Ocean. The first report of local transmission of Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere occurred in Brazil during May 2015. Since that time, local transmission has been identified in numerous countries and territories in the Americas. Local transmission of Zika virus is not currently occurring in the United States; however, cases have been reported among individuals who have traveled outside the U.S. to affected areas.

How do people get infected with Zika?

The Aedes species mosquitoes transmit the Zika virus. These mosquitoes bite mostly during the daytime. The Aedes mosquito is found in Oklahoma, but has not been infected with the Zika virus. The virus can be found in the blood stream of infected people and has the potential to be picked up from an infected person by a mosquito. That infected mosquito could then transmit the virus to other people through a mosquito bite. In addition, there is evidence that the virus can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, sexual transmission, as well as perinatal (mother-to-fetus) transmission.

What are the symptoms and how soon after infection do they occur?

Most people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. If symptoms develop, the most common are fever, rash, conjunctivitis (red eyes) or joint pain. Other symptoms may include headache and muscle pain. Symptoms usually begin 2 - 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito, and last several days to a week.

What's the relationship between Zika virus and microcephaly in newborns?

There is an established, causal link between Zika infection and microcephaly (abnormally small head), as well as other severe fetal birth defects (eye defects, hearing loss, impaired growth) in newborns. It is suspected that pregnant women who contract Zika virus through the bite of an infected mosquito or through sexual transmission are at risk of the fetal birth defect. Emerging studies show that the risk of birth defects in babies is highest among women who had sexual contact with a symptomatic partner during pregnancy or women who developed symptoms of illness during pregnancy.

What are the current travel recommendations?

Refer to the CDC Traveler's Health website for current information on travel advisories.
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

If I am pregnant, is it safe to travel?

It is recommended that pregnant women in any trimester should not travel to any area where transmission of the Zika virus is ongoing. If a person is pregnant or trying to become pregnant, and going to travel to one of these areas, it is important to consult with your doctor and to follow steps to prevent mosquito bites.

If a woman is not pregnant and bitten by a mosquito that is infected with Zika virus, will future pregnancies be at risk?

No. Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for up to a week. Babies conceived after the virus has cleared the blood are no longer at risk for infection.

What's the relationship between Zika virus and Guillain-Barré Syndrome?

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare autoimmune disease affecting the nervous system leading to muscle weakness. Cases of GBS were reported among persons infected with Zika in the French Polynesia outbreak that occurred during 2013-2014, and a slight increase of GBS cases has recently been noted in the United States among travelers as well as numerous other countries (Brazil, El Salvador) where Zika outbreaks are ongoing. Whether Zika virus infection causes GBS is still not clear; further research is needed to determine if a possible relationship exists.

What is the treatment for Zika?

There is no vaccine available or medicine to treat Zika virus. Symptoms may improve with rest, drinking fluids, and/or taking medication to relieve fever and pain. Speak to your healthcare provider for specific recommendations.

What should I do if I think I (or someone I know) might be infected with Zika virus?

Contact your healthcare provider and notify them of any recent travel (especially outside of the US) and mosquito exposure. This is particularly important for women who are pregnant or of childbearing age. There are other causes of these symptoms. Consult with your healthcare provider to determine if testing is recommended to identify the cause.

If you are sick with fever and joint pain after returning from an area where Zika occurs, contact your healthcare provider, and avoid mosquito bites during the three weeks from onset of symptoms, as well as using barrier protection for any sexual activity with partners, to prevent possible spread of the virus

How can I reduce the chance of getting infected with Zika during international travel?

1. Research your travel destination to determine if there are any Zika virus travel advisories.
2. If you are currently pregnant, it is advised to not travel to areas with ongoing Zika transmission. If you are planning on becoming pregnant in the near future, speak to your physician about risk of infection.
3. Reduce mosquito exposure in the following ways when traveling to affected areas:
 - Keep windows closed and use air conditioning. Or if open, use window/door screens.
 - Use mosquito repellents containing 15% DEET, 15% picaridin, 15% IR3535, or 30% oil of lemon eucalypts according to product instructions OR wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
 - Wear permethrin-treated clothing.
 - Use mosquito nets on bedding.
 - Empty standing water from outdoor containers.