

Infection Prevention and You



What you need to know about Zika virus

What is Zika virus?

Zika is a mosquito-borne virus that is currently causing a large outbreak primarily in Central and South America. While no locally transmitted cases of Zika have been reported in the continental U.S., cases have been found in returning travelers and these cases could lead to the local spread of the virus in some areas of the U.S. See other areas where Zika has been found (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>).

What are the symptoms of Zika virus?

Only about 1 in 5 people with Zika virus will get symptoms of illness; because of this, many people may not realize they have been infected. If a person does develop symptoms, they're usually mild and include fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis.

How does it spread?

Zika virus is spread through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. Zika virus can also be sexually transmitted from a man to his sex partners. Sexual transmission of Zika virus from infected women to their sex partners has not been reported.

Who is most at risk for complications from Zika virus?

Pregnant women are most at risk for complications from Zika virus. This is because there is strong evidence of a link between pregnant women who get the Zika virus and microcephaly in their babies. Microcephaly is a birth defect where a baby's head is smaller than expected. This birth defect can result in seizures, intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, among other problems.

Currently no vaccine or medication exists to prevent or treat Zika virus infection. Women who traveled to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission during pregnancy should be evaluated for Zika virus infection and tested in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Interim Guidance.

How can pregnant women prevent Zika virus?

Out of an abundance of caution, the CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:

- Pregnant women in any trimester should not travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who do travel to one of these areas should talk to their healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during their trip.
- Women trying to become pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during their trip.
- Pregnant women should discuss their male partner's potential exposures to mosquitoes and history of Zika-like illness (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms>) with their healthcare provider.

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What are some tips to avoid mosquito (bug) bites?

Mosquitoes that spread Zika virus bite both indoors and outdoors, mostly during the daytime; therefore, it is important to ensure protection from mosquitoes throughout the entire day.

- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellent.
 - Follow product directions and reapply as directed.
 - If using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
 - Using an insect repellent is safe for pregnant women and nursing mothers.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and hats.
- Avoid woody and brushy areas with high grass, brush, and leaves and standing water.

How can men prevent Zika transmission to their pregnant partners?

The following interim guideline from the CDC (released 3/25/16) applies to men who live in or have traveled to areas with active Zika virus transmission:

Couples in which a woman is pregnant

- Couples in which a woman is pregnant should use condoms consistently and correctly or abstain from sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

Other couples concerned about sexual transmission

- Couples in which a man had confirmed Zika virus infection or clinical illness consistent with Zika virus disease should consider using condoms or abstaining from sex for at least 6 months after onset of illness.
- Couples in which a man traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission but did not develop symptoms of Zika virus disease should consider using condoms or abstaining from sex for at least 8 weeks after departure from the area.
- Couples in which a man resides in an area with active Zika virus transmission but has not developed symptoms of Zika virus disease might consider using condoms or abstaining from sex while active transmission persists.

Where can I get up-to-date information on Zika virus?

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for the most up-to-date information and guidance on Zika: www.cdc.gov/zika.

Additional resources

CDC—Zika virus <http://www.cdc.gov/zika>

CDC—Areas with Zika <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>

CDC—For pregnant women <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/index.html>

CDC—Symptoms, Diagnosis, & Treatment <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/>

CDC—Update: Interim Guidance for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of Zika Virus — United States, 2016
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6512e3.htm?s_cid=mm6512e3_w.htm

CDC—Update: Interim Guidance for Health Care Providers Caring for Women of Reproductive Age with Possible Zika Virus Exposure — United States, 2016 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6505e1er.htm>

Environmental Protection Agency—Find the Insect Repellent that is Right for You <http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>

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