



# Zika Virus Fact Sheet

## **What is Zika?**

Zika is a viral disease caused by the Zika virus.

## **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 by mosquitos is not currently occurring in the United States; however, cases of sexual transmission have occurred. Many more 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. They most frequently bite during the daytime, both indoors and outdoors. They are most active during the early morning and late afternoon. The *Aedes* mosquito is found in Oklahoma, but local transmission has not been identified. The virus can be found in the blood stream of infected people during the first 7 days of infection and during that time it has the potential to be picked up from the infected person by an *Aedes* species mosquito. That infected mosquito could then transmit the virus to other people through a mosquito bite. Zika virus can also be spread via sexual contact. Evidence from Brazil suggests that the virus can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, though this has not occurred in the United States. Perinatal (mother-to-fetus) transmission has occurred and is undergoing further investigation.

## **What are the symptoms of Zika and how soon after infection do they occur?**

Symptoms can be similar to those of dengue and chikungunya (which are also spread through the same species of mosquitos that transmit Zika.) Symptoms occur about 1 out of 5 individuals that are infected and most commonly present as 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. Severe cases requiring hospitalization are uncommon and death from Zika is rare.

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

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

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

There is evidence which shows that Zika virus can cause microcephaly and other fetal brain defects. Pregnant women who contract Zika virus are at increased risk of their babies developing microcephaly and other fetal birth defects. Studies are ongoing to further understand this relationship. Much is still unknown about the relationship between Zika virus exposure and negative birth outcomes. Great caution should be taken by pregnant women or women who plan to be pregnant in avoiding Zika virus 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 an increase of GBS cases has been noted in Brazil but whether Zika virus infection causes GBS is still not clear; further research is needed to determine if a possible relationship exists.

### **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. 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; and
  - Empty standing water from outdoor containers.

### **If I am pregnant is it safe to travel?**

It is recommended that pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing 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. Please visit the CDC Traveler's Health website for updated travel advisories.

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

### **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 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 child bearing 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 seven days from onset of symptoms to prevent possible spread of the virus.

### **How can I avoid mosquitos that may be carrying Zika?**

- Aedes mosquitoes are active biters during daytime hours. Be sure to use insect repellent containing DEET and wear long sleeves and pants when outside.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used. Mow areas of tall grass to allow the ground to dry more quickly.