



Revised November 16, 2016

Zika virus

What is Zika?

Zika is an infection caused by the Zika virus that spreads to people primarily through bites of infected mosquitoes. Most adults with Zika have no symptoms or only mild symptoms. The biggest concern about this infection is that it can pass from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and have serious results, including fetal loss and birth defects.

Where does Zika occur?

Zika is found in the Americas, Pacific Islands, and parts of Africa and Asia. For a map of where Zika is occurring, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Zika webpage: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>. Because the mosquitoes that spread the virus are found around the world, it is possible that outbreaks will occur in new countries. Limited spread of Zika virus by mosquitoes in the continental U.S. has been reported, but this has not occurred in Virginia. For a map of where the mosquitoes that could spread Zika virus are located in the U.S., see CDC's Zika webpage: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/range.html>.

How does Zika spread?

Zika virus is usually spread between people through the bites of infected mosquitoes. The primary mosquito that spreads Zika virus is the Yellow fever mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*); the Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) can also spread the virus. A person infected with Zika will have Zika virus in the blood, especially in the first week of illness. If a mosquito bites that infected person, the mosquito becomes infected and can then bite and pass the virus to another person. People who are infected but who are not sick can still pass the virus on to mosquitoes that bite them.

Zika virus can also spread from a mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Zika virus can spread through unprotected sex from a person who has Zika to his or her sex partners, even if the infected person is not sick. Zika virus may be spread through blood transfusion.

Who gets Zika?

Anyone who travels to an area where Zika virus is spreading or who has unprotected sex with someone who has traveled to these places can become infected. For a map of where Zika is occurring, see CDC's Zika webpage: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

About 80% of people who are infected with Zika virus 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, if present, can appear within 3 to 14 days after exposure to Zika virus.

How dangerous is Zika?

Scientists at the CDC have concluded, after careful review of existing evidence, that Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly and other severe birth defects. This finding does not mean, however, that all women who have Zika virus infection during pregnancy will have babies with health problems. Microcephaly means a baby or child has a smaller than normal brain and head. Other problems in fetuses and infants infected with Zika virus before birth include eye and hearing defects and impaired growth. In a small number of infected people, there have also been reports of neurologic syndromes, such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome. Studies are underway to learn more about health conditions associated with Zika virus and the effects of Zika virus infection during pregnancy.

What special precautions should pregnant women take to prevent Zika?

The role of Zika virus infections during pregnancy is being studied. Pregnant women should avoid traveling to areas with ongoing Zika virus infections. If pregnant women need to travel to an area with Zika virus, it is recommended they take the following steps to prevent Zika:

- Choose an EPA-registered insect repellent and use according to the product label
- Use the repellent day and night because the mosquitoes that transmit Zika virus will bite during the day and 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 with screened windows or air-conditioning, or use a bed net if you sleep in a room that is exposed to the outdoors
- For the duration of pregnancy, use a condom every time during sex or do not have sex to prevent Zika and other sexually transmitted infections

What special precautions should couples trying to become pregnant take to prevent Zika?

Couples trying to become pregnant should consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika. For a map of where Zika is occurring, see CDC's Zika webpage: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>. If a member of the couple travels to an area where Zika is occurring, they should take these steps to prevent Zika:

- Follow the same recommended steps for pregnant women to prevent mosquito bites (above)
- Wait for a period of time before trying to become pregnant. It is recommended that women wait at least 8 weeks from when symptoms began (if sick) or last possible exposure (if not sick); men are advised to wait at least 6 months from when symptoms began (if sick) or last possible

exposure (if not sick). While waiting to conceive, couples should either avoid sex or use condoms every time during sex or sexual activities.

What is the treatment for Zika?

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. During the mosquito season in Virginia (May to October), 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 Zika be prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus infection. Infections can be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites and sexual exposure to the virus. Avoiding mosquito bites 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 mosquitoes outside, eliminating standing water from containers in yards (including bird baths, flower pots, buckets) to stop mosquito breeding. To avoid sexual exposure to Zika virus, travelers to affected areas and their sex partners should abstain from sex or use condoms during sex or sexual activities.

What should I do if I think I have Zika?

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>. For questions about mosquito control programs in Virginia, please visit the Virginia Mosquito Control Association website: <http://www.mosquito-va.org/>.