



Zika Virus

September 2017

What is Zika virus?

Zika is a virus that can cause illness in humans. Most people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. If they do develop, the illness is usually mild and lasts for several days to a week. Common symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes. Other possible features include muscle pain and headache. To date, there have been no deaths reported that have been directly caused by Zika virus.

Unfortunately, Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a birth defect called microcephaly, as well as other serious fetal brain defects. In a small number of patients Zika infection has also been associated with a neurological condition known as Guillain-Barre syndrome. This association is under active investigation.

More information on the symptoms of Zika infection is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/index.html>.

Where could I contract the Zika virus?

Zika was first found in Africa in the 1940s. From there it spread to Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. In May 2015, it was detected in Brazil and since then it has spread to North America and the Caribbean.

Within the United States, Texas is one of many states that has reported Zika, but the risk level is very low. The list of countries with Zika risks have changed over the last couple months and will most certainly change over time. You can access where Zika has been reported following this website: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2017-case-counts.html>

Is Zika virus in the United States?

From January 1, 2015 to August 30, 2017 there have been a 5,435 symptomatic Zika virus disease cases reported to the CDC. This number includes

- 5,162 cases in travelers returning from affected areas
- 224 cases acquired through presumed local mosquito-borne transmission
- 49 cases acquired through other routes, including sexual transmission (N=47), laboratory transmission (N=1), and person-to-person through an unknown route (N=1)

How is Zika transmitted/spread?

There are a number of ways Zika virus can be transmitted to people. The most common is through the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* or an *Aedes albopictus* mosquito. The estimated range of these mosquito can be found here, but should not be assumed to represent the risk of disease spread:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/range.html>.

Because Zika lives in certain body fluids, it can also be passed through sex from a person with the virus to his or her partners. Studies are ongoing to determine how long Zika stays in semen and vaginal fluids of infected people and how long it can be passed to sexual partners. A third route of transmission is from a pregnant mother to her fetus during pregnancy. This is the most serious concern as it can lead to birth defects. To date, though, there is no record of Zika being passed to infants through breast feeding.

Finally, although it is rare, Zika virus can be transmitted through blood products. There have been no cases of infection caused by blood transfusion in the United States, but there has been one case of laboratory-acquired Zika.

Zika cannot be spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing or touching. More information on the transmission of Zika virus is available from the CDC at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/index.html>.

Can Zika spread through urine and saliva?

Zika virus has been detected in the saliva and urine of infected people, but there is no evidence of transmission of Zika to others through those fluids. More research is needed to confirm a possibility of infection through those fluids.

Is Zika a risk to first responders and EMS workers?

Contracting HIV or hepatitis B or C is a bigger risk to fire fighters, EMS workers, and other first responders than acquiring Zika virus. With this in mind, health care workers should use universal precautions and standard body fluid precautions when caring for patients. Universal precautions will more than adequately prevent blood borne transmission of Zika. Universal precautions are the best approach to infection control and to treat all human blood and certain human body fluids as if they were known to be infectious for HIV, HBV and other blood borne pathogens.

How do I protect myself and family from Zika virus?

There is currently no vaccine for Zika, but people can protect themselves from mosquito bites and from transmitting the virus through sex. The following steps can reduce exposure to mosquitoes and their bites:

- Wear clothing that covers the skin (long-sleeved shirts and long pants);
- Use insect repellents that are registered with the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#);
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear;
- Install or repair and use window and door screens;
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if screened-in or air-conditioned rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors;
- Use mosquito nets to protect babies less than 2 months of age in strollers, cribs and carriers;
- Around home or work, remove standing water from things such as plant pots, bird baths and garbage containers where mosquitoes could lay their eggs.
- If a person is sexually active, he or she can reduce the risk of getting Zika virus by using condoms during sex. For more information on the prevention of Zika please visit the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>.

Health Information Resources

General Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Zika Virus - <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

World Health Organization (WHO)

- Zika Virus Disease - <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/zika/en/>
- Zika Virus Fact Sheet - <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/>
- Zika Virus Disease: Questions and Answers - <http://www.who.int/features/qa/zika/en/>

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization

- Zika Virus Infection - http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_topics&view=article&id=427&Itemid=41484

Pregnant Women and Zika Virus

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Pregnant Women - <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/index.html>
- Women Trying to Become Pregnant - <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/women-and-their-partners.html>
- Update: Interim Guidance for Health Care Providers Caring for Pregnant Women with Possible Zika Virus Exposure — United States, July 2016 - http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6529e1.htm?s_cid=mm6529e1_w.htm

Laboratory Detection and Diagnosis of Zika Virus

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Testing for Zika – <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/diagnosis.html>
- Diagnostic Tests For Zika Virus – <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/types-of-tests.html>
- Understanding Zika Virus Test Results – <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/testresults.html>

Prevention

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Prevention – <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health

- Interim Guidance for Protecting Workers from Occupational Exposure to Zika Virus - <https://www.osha.gov/zika/>

Travel

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Zika Travel Information - <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-information>

World Health Organization

- Information for travelers (Zika virus) - <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/zika/information-for-travelers/en/>

Surveillance and Control of Mosquito Vectors

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Integrated Mosquito Management – https://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/integrated_mosquito_management.html