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Ohio Department of Health

Facts About Zika Virus

What is Zika virus?

Zika virus is a disease primarily transmitted by mosquitoes. The disease has historically occurred in Africa, Southeast Asia and islands in the Pacific Ocean. In May 2015, Zika virus was found for the first time in the Western Hemisphere in northeastern Brazil. The virus has since spread through much of the Caribbean, Central America and South America. There have been no reported cases of Zika virus disease transmission through mosquito bites in Ohio or anywhere else in the continental United States at this time. However, cases have been reported in travelers returning to the United States from Zika virus-affected countries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains an updated list of affected countries and territories as well as associated travel advisories on its website at www.cdc.gov/zika.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus will develop symptoms. Illness from Zika virus is usually mild, and most people feel better within a week. Symptoms of Zika virus include fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle pain and headache. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon, and deaths are rare. Rare complications may include Guillain-Barré syndrome (neurologic abnormalities) following a Zika virus infection.

What are the concerns about Zika virus and pregnancy?

Zika virus can be spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus. There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly in babies of mothers who had Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and birth defects is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women. Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

Until more is known, CDC recommends that women trying to get pregnant and their male partners talk to their healthcare providers before traveling to areas with Zika virus transmission. Because sexual transmission is possible, both men and women should strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip. More information about Zika virus and pregnancy is available on CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/zika.

How do people get Zika virus, and is it contagious?

There is no indication that Zika virus can spread from person to person through casual contact.

The most common way people get Zika virus is through the bite of an infected mosquito. The primary mosquito that transmits Zika virus is *Aedes aegypti*, the yellow fever mosquito. This mosquito is found in the tropics and southern United States. It is not established in Ohio. *Aedes albopictus*, the Asian tiger mosquito which is established in parts of Ohio, may potentially transmit Zika virus in the United States, although it has not yet been implicated in the transmission of human cases.

Yellow fever mosquito, Aedes aegypti, which can carry dengue chilkungunya or Zika viruses. Photo by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Zika virus also can be transmitted from a man to a woman through sexual contact. In known cases of likely sexual transmission, the men had Zika virus symptoms, although in one case the virus was spread a few days before symptoms developed. At this time, there is no evidence that a woman can transmit Zika virus to a man through sexual contact. However, more research is needed to understand this issue. More information about Zika virus sexual transmission is available on CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/zika.

A mother can pass Zika virus to her fetus during pregnancy. A mother already infected with Zika virus near the time of delivery can pass on the virus to her newborn around the time of birth, but this is rare. To date, there are no reports of infants getting Zika virus through breast milk. Because of the benefits of breastfeeding, mothers are encouraged to breastfeed even in areas where Zika virus is found.

There have not been any confirmed blood transfusion transmission cases in the United States at this time. There have been reports of blood transfusion transmission cases in Brazil, and these reports are currently being investigated.

How is a Zika virus infection treated?

There is no specific treatment for a Zika virus infection. Treat the symptoms by getting plenty of rest, drinking fluids to stay hydrated and taking medications to reduce fever and pain such as acetaminophen. Avoid taking aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications. If you are pregnant, contact your obstetrician or prenatal care provider for additional follow-up.

How can I prevent becoming infected with Zika virus or spreading it to others?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus infections at this time. Preventing mosquito bites is the best defense against Zika virus infections and other mosquito-borne viruses.

Protect Yourself From Mosquito Bites

Daytime is most dangerous
Mosquitoes that spread chikungunya, dengue, and Zika are aggressive daytime biters. They can also bite at night.

Use insect repellent
It works!
Look for the following active ingredients:
• DEET • PICARIDIN • IR3535

Wear protective clothes
Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and use insect repellent. For extra protection, treat clothing with permethrin.

Mosquito-proof your home
Use screens on windows and doors. Use air conditioning when available. Keep mosquitoes from laying eggs in and near standing water.

CDC has recommended that pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas with active Zika virus transmission.

To prevent potential Zika virus sexual transmission, CDC recommends that men who reside in or have traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission should use condoms every time during sexual contact or abstain from sexual activity with a pregnant sex partner for the duration of the pregnancy. CDC also recommends that pregnant women without symptoms of Zika virus be offered testing two to 12 weeks after returning from areas with ongoing Zika virus transmission.

While there have not been any reports of cases transmitted through blood transfusions in the United States at this time, the Food and Drug Administration recommends as a precaution that certain people defer donating blood. This includes people who traveled to or resided in areas with active Zika virus transmission in the past four weeks, people with symptoms consistent with Zika virus infection in the past four weeks, and those who have had sexual contact with people living in or traveling to areas with active transmission in the previous three months.

As a precaution, it is recommend that people suspected to have Zika virus avoid mosquito exposure for the week after symptom onset when mosquitoes are active (usually from May to October in Ohio) in order to prevent the possibility that mosquitoes might become infected by biting an infected person and then transmit the virus to other people.

For more information, please visit these websites:

- ODH Zika Virus Information: http://www.odh.ohio.gov/zika
- CDC Zika Virus Information: http://www.cdc.gov/zika
- CDC Areas with Active Zika Virus Transmission: http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html
- CDC Insect Repellent Use & Safety: http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html
- World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/topics/zika/en/
- Pan-American Health Organization: http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_topics&view=article&id=427&Itemid=41484&lang=en

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