

## BACKGROUND

Zika virus is primarily spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Zika virus emerged in Brazil as early as 2014 and rapidly spread throughout South America, Central America and the Caribbean during 2015. There was also limited local mosquito-borne transmission in the United States during 2016 and 2017 in Florida and Texas. Local transmission means that mosquitoes in the area have been infected with the virus and are spreading it to people.

## WHO DOES THE ISSUE IMPACT?

The *Aedes* species mosquitoes (*Ae. Aegypti* and *Ae. Albopictus*) that spread Zika virus are found in most tropical and subtropical regions of the world, including several US territories and states. Anyone spending time in Zika endemic areas should take mosquito-bite prevention measures, especially pregnant women since Zika can be passed to the fetus during pregnancy.

## COMPLICATIONS

People don't usually get sick enough to go to the hospital, and very rarely die of Zika. However, Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a birth defect called microcephaly as well as other severe fetal brain defects. Microcephaly is a birth defect in which a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age. Babies with microcephaly often have smaller brains that might not have developed properly.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Many people infected with Zika virus won't have symptoms, but the most common include fever, rash, headache, joint pain, red eyes and muscle pain. Zika is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.

## CAUSES AND TRANSMISSION

Zika virus is transmitted to people through mosquito bites. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. Zika virus is most often spread to people by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These mosquitoes bite mostly during the daytime. Zika virus can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus if infected during pregnancy and passed through sex from an infected partner.

## TESTS AND DIAGNOSIS

The symptoms of Zika are similar to those of dengue and chikungunya, diseases spread by the same mosquitoes that transmit Zika. See your health care provider if you develop the symptoms described above and if you have visited an area where Zika is found. If you have recently traveled, tell your health care provider when and where you traveled.

In order to diagnose a Zika virus infection, a health care provider will need to collect a blood sample from the patient and have it tested for evidence of Zika virus infection. The laboratory will run tests on the patient's blood sample to look for antibodies to Zika virus or to detect Zika virus RNA (viral particles).

## TREATMENTS

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika virus. To treat the symptoms, you should get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids and take medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or paracetamol to reduce fever and pain. Do not take aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) until dengue can be ruled out. This is to reduce the risk of bleeding.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

To prevent Zika from mosquito bites:

- Use EPA approved insect repellent
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to cover your skin
- Treat clothing and gear with an insecticide
- Sleep under a mosquito net
- Take steps to control mosquitoes indoors and outdoors by
  - Using screens on windows and doors and repairing holes
  - Using air conditioning
  - Stopping mosquitoes from laying eggs in or near water, i.e., dumping or draining items that hold water such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, trash containers, etc.

Infected people can pass Zika through sex even when they don't have symptoms. Use of condoms during sex can reduce the chance of getting Zika.

If you or a family member might have Zika virus:

- See your healthcare provider if you develop any of the symptoms described for Zika; tell him or her about your travel

## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

PA DOH Vectorborne Disease webpage: [Vectorborne Diseases](#)

CDC Zika virus website: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

*This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.*

**If you have any questions, contact us at 1-877-PA-HEALTH.**

