

2/25/16

## Zika Virus

### **What is Zika virus?**

Zika virus causes disease that is spread to people by the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. It is related to yellow fever, dengue, and West Nile virus.

### **What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?**

Approximately 80% of people who are infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. Of those who do, symptoms are usually mild and can include fever, rash beginning with the face and spreading downward, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). It is rare that the illness is severe enough to require hospitalization. Symptoms usually last less than a week.

### **How long does it take for someone to become ill?**

When someone is bitten by a Zika virus-infected mosquito, symptoms usually develop in 2–7 days after exposure.

### **Where did Zika virus come from?**

Zika virus was first identified in Uganda in animals in 1947 and now is common in most of Africa and parts of Asia. It began spreading widely in the Western hemisphere in May 2015, when an outbreak started in Brazil.

### **How dangerous is Zika virus?**

Several months after Zika began spreading in Brazil, there was a large increase in the number of babies born with a congenital birth defect called microcephaly, which includes a smaller than normal head size and brain abnormalities. Scientists now believe these

abnormalities happened because women were infected with Zika while pregnant and it harmed the developing baby. Scientists also noticed an increase in cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome. Guillain-Barré is a neurological illness that causes muscle weakness beginning in the hands and feet and can spread and turn into paralysis. Although most people fully recover from Guillain-Barré, some people can have permanent damage.

### **Is there a cure for Zika virus?**

There is no cure for Zika but symptoms can be treated.

### **Is there a vaccine to protect against Zika virus?**

There is no vaccine against Zika at this time.

### **I am pregnant. What should I do?**

If you are pregnant, you should not travel to affected areas. If you have already traveled to affected areas while pregnant, you should discuss next steps with your health care provider.

### **Is Zika spread any other way besides from the bite of an infected mosquito?**

There have been a few reports of sexual transmission of the virus from an infected man to his female partner. The virus has been found in the semen of men infected with the Zika virus, but it is not known for how long the virus can persist in semen, or what the risk is for a man transmitting it to a sexual partner. For this reason, to protect pregnant women and their unborn babies, the CDC is

recommending that men who have traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission and who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual contact or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex for the duration of the woman's pregnancy.

There have been no reports of a female infected with the Zika virus transmitting it to a man through sexual activity. I Zika virus has also been found in urine and saliva, but there is no evidence that the virus can be transmitted through contact with urine or saliva.

### **Is there concern about blood containing the virus?**

There have been rare reports of Zika virus being transmitted through a blood transfusion. The virus can be found in blood for up to a week after a person develops symptoms of a Zika infection, and during this time, it is possible that a person could donate blood containing the virus. Therefore, to ensure the safety of the blood supply, the American Red Cross is asking people who have traveled to a country with active transmission of the virus not to donate blood for 28 days after returning.

### **How can I know if I have been infected?**

Your health care provider can coordinate testing with your state or local health department.

### **Will Zika spread further?**

Because the mosquitoes that carry Zika virus (the genus *Aedes*) are found in many parts of the world, Zika is likely to spread to new countries.

### **Are Granite Staters at risk for Zika virus?**

The type of mosquito known to carry the Zika virus is not found in New Hampshire, but people who travel to affected areas are at risk.

### **How can I protect myself if I travel to an affected area?**

Travelers should go to a travel clinic before any trip to the tropics to address travel-related diseases, such as malaria, yellow fever, and hepatitis A. If you are traveling to a country with Zika virus or other viruses spread by mosquitoes, protect yourself and others:

- Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to the manufacturer's label;
- Wear long sleeves and pants; *Aedes* mosquitoes often bite during the day;
- Stay in places with window and door screens;
- Sleep under a bed net if mosquitoes cannot be kept out of the place you are staying; and
- Eliminate sources of standing water, which allow the mosquitoes to breed.

**For more information about Zika virus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika) or the Pan American Health Organization at [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_topics&view=article&id=427&Itemid=41484&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_topics&view=article&id=427&Itemid=41484&lang=en). For questions about Zika virus illness, contact the DHHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 1-800-852-3345 x4496 or 603-271-4496.**