

Zika Virus Disease Information

Zika virus disease, or Zika, is an illness that can spread to people from mosquitoes that carry the virus. It may also spread from person to person through infected body fluids. Zika first occurred in Africa, but it has recently spread to new areas in South America and Central America. The location of Zika continues to change. The virus occurs in tropical climates. Most adults who become infected with the Zika virus do not have serious illness. Zika virus disease may increase the risk of birth defects in an unborn baby whose mother is infected with the virus. It may also increase the risk of miscarriage.

WHAT CAUSES ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE?

Zika virus disease is spread mostly through the bite of a certain type of mosquito. Unlike most mosquitoes, this mosquito bites during the day in addition to biting at night. The infection can pass from a pregnant woman to her baby. It has also been reported that the virus can spread through sex or a blood transfusion. If you have had Zika virus disease, it is unlikely that you will have it again.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE?

Many people do not have any symptoms when infected with the Zika virus. If symptoms appear, they usually start about a week after a bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms are mild. They include:

- Fever.
- Rash.
- Red eyes.
- Joint pain.

It is unusual to be hospitalized for this disease. Babies born to mothers who were infected with the Zika virus while pregnant may be at risk for developing a brain or head that is smaller than expected (*microcephaly*). This has not been proven yet. Babies with microcephaly can have developmental delays, seizures, hearing problems, and vision problems.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET THESE SYMPTOMS?

There is no medicine or treatment for Zika virus disease. Take these actions to help relieve your symptoms:

- Drink enough fluid to keep your urine clear or pale yellow.
- Rest as needed.
- Take medicines only as directed by your health care provider. These include over-the-counter medicines and prescription medicines.
- Continue to follow precautions for avoiding new mosquito bites. The infection can spread to other people if a mosquito bites an infected person and then bites someone else.

See your health care provider if you develop symptoms of Zika virus disease after traveling to a high-risk area.

HOW CAN ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE BE PREVENTED?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus disease. The best way to prevent the disease is to avoid infected mosquitoes and avoid exposure to body fluids that can spread the virus.

Take these steps to avoid mosquito bites when you are in high-risk areas:

- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Limit your outdoor activities.
- **Do not** open windows unless they have window screens.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.
- Use insect repellent. The best insect repellents have:

- DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535 in them.
- Higher amounts of an active ingredient in them.
- **Do not** use OLE on children who are younger than 3 years of age. **Do not** use insect repellent on babies who are younger than 2 months of age.
- **Do not** apply insect repellent under clothing.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply the sunscreen before the insect repellent.
- Treat clothing with permethrin. **Do not** apply permethrin directly to your skin. Follow label directions for use.
- Get rid of standing water where mosquitoes may reproduce. Standing water is often found in items such as buckets, bowls, animal food dishes, and flowerpots.

To prevent Zika virus disease from passing through blood, wait to donate blood until:

- 4 weeks after you have traveled to an area where Zika virus disease has occurred.
- 4 weeks after you have had symptoms of Zika virus disease.
- 4 weeks after you have had sexual contact with a man:
 - Who has had Zika virus disease.
 - Who has traveled to an area with the Zika virus disease anytime during the 3 months before the sexual contact. You must wait this long because Zika virus can live longer in semen.

Take these steps to prevent Zika virus disease from passing during sexual contact:

- Men with possible exposure to, or symptoms of, Zika virus disease should use condoms correctly during all sexual contact. Zika virus disease can be spread by a man to his sexual partners.
- If you are unsure of your male partner's travel history, you should make sure that condoms are used correctly during all sexual contact.

HOW DO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS DIAGNOSE ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE?

A sample of your blood can be tested for the virus. Pregnant women should be tested if they may have been exposed to the virus or if they have symptoms of Zika virus disease. Talk with your health care provider about what tests are available and when you should be tested.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW IF I AM PREGNANT OR I AM TRYING TO GET PREGNANT?

Pregnant women should avoid any possible exposure to Zika virus disease. They should take the following precautions:

- Avoid travel to high-risk areas. Check the CDC travel website at www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html to identify these areas. The locations where Zika is being reported are changing often.
- If you must travel, talk with a health care provider before going to areas where Zika virus disease is spreading.
- If you are in, or must travel to, one of these areas, take all precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Insect repellents are safe to use during pregnancy.
- For the rest of your pregnancy, avoid sexual contact with men who may have been exposed to Zika virus or men who have possible symptoms of Zika virus disease. Make sure a condom is used correctly during each sexual encounter if you are unsure about your partner's history.
- Ask your health care provider about when it is safe to attempt pregnancy after travel to areas where Zika virus disease is spreading.

Male partners of pregnant women should take the following precautions:

- Avoid travel to high-risk areas. Check the CDC travel website at www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html to identify these areas. The locations where Zika is being reported are changing often.

- If you must travel, talk with a health care provider before going to areas where Zika virus disease is spreading.
- If you are in, or must travel to, one of these areas, take all precautions to avoid mosquito bites.
- After you return home, talk with a health care provider about when it is safe to have sexual contact.

Document Released: 2/08/2016 Document Reviewed: 2/26/2016

ExitCare® Patient Information ©2015 ExitCare, LLC. This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.