

What Parents Should Know About Zika Virus

What is Zika Virus?

Zika is a virus that is thought to spread to people through mosquito bites, but there has been evidence of sexual transmission. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to one week. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus infection develop symptoms. Hospitalization is not common. Zika virus has been found in Brazil, Mexico, several countries in Central and South America and several islands in the Caribbean including Puerto Rico, and some cases were recently found in the U.S.

What are the Symptoms of Zika Virus?

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache.

How does Zika Virus Spread?

Zika virus is thought to be primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that spread chikungunya and dengue. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. Zika virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. There is evidence that the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted.

Who is at Risk?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is found who has not already been infected is at risk for infection, including pregnant women. Zika virus also spreads through sexual contact.

How is Zika Virus Infection Diagnosed?

See your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes). If you have recently traveled, tell your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika virus infection or other similar viral diseases like dengue or chikungunya.

Should a Child Infected with Zika Virus be excluded from Head Start or Child Care?

Zika virus does not spread from casual contact with others. As usual, children should remain out of the center if they have a fever.

How to Stop the Spread of Zika Virus?

- No vaccine exists to prevent Zika virus infection.
- Mosquitoes that spread the virus bite mostly during the day.
- Dress children in clothes that cover arms and legs when they're going outside.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use EPA registered insect repellents.
 - Follow label instructions
 - Reapply as directed.
- If you are using sunscreen – apply that first then put on the insect repellent.
- Spray insect repellent on your hands then put it on your child's face.
- Don't use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months.
- Don't put insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin.

How to Talk to Children about Zika Virus

- If children have questions, make time to listen and answer their questions.
- Speak in a calm tone of voice. Use reassuring words.
- Keep all explanations easy for your child to understand.

Where Can I Learn More?

- [EPA approved repellents](#)
- [Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers on talking with children about infectious disease outbreaks.](#)
- [Zika virus information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)