What is Zika virus disease (Zika)?

Zika is a disease caused by Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don’t get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

Is this a new virus?

No. Outbreaks of Zika previously have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Zika virus likely will continue to spread to new areas. In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. Since that time, local transmission has been reported in many other countries and territories.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that spread Chikungunya and dengue. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and they can also bite at night. 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. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

Does Zika virus infection in pregnant women cause birth defects?

There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly (a condition in which a baby’s head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age) and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and these outcomes is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:
Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
  o Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
  o If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

Women who are trying to become pregnant:
  o Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
  o Strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.


**Does Zika virus infection cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?**

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder where a person’s own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes, paralysis. These symptoms can last a few weeks or several months. While most people fully recover from GBS, some people have permanent damage and in rare cases, people have died.

We do not know if Zika virus infection causes GBS. It is difficult to determine if any particular germ “causes” GBS. The Brazil Ministry of Health (MOH) is reporting an increased number of people affected with GBS. CDC is collaborating with the Brazil MOH to determine if having Zika makes it more likely you will get GBS.

**Areas with active mosquito-borne transmission of Zika virus**

- Cape Verde
- The Caribbean (Currently includes: Barbados; Curaçao; Dominican Republic; Guadeloupe; Haiti; Jamaica; Martinique; the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory; Saint Martin; U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Central America (Currently includes: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama)
- Mexico
- Pacific Islands (Currently includes: American Samoa, Samoa, Tonga)
- South America (Currently includes: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela)