

Zika Virus

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What is Zika virus infection?

Zika is a virus (germ) that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Over the past several months, public health officials have become aware of a Zika virus outbreak involving many countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

Most people infected with Zika virus do not get sick. About 1 in 5 people with infection may develop symptoms including fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a rare neurologic disease which can cause progressive weakness, have been reported in persons with Zika virus infection; the risk of this illness is currently being studied.

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, and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. To what extent Zika virus may be associated with birth defects is currently being studied.

How is Zika virus spread?

Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person that already has Zika virus infection. Infected mosquitoes then bite other people and spread the virus. Zika virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby if the mother gets bitten by an infected mosquito during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Zika virus is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing an infected person. However, Zika virus might be spread by sexual contact; men who have traveled to an affected area who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity or consistently use condoms during sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is commonly found is at risk for infection, including pregnant women.

Is there Zika virus in Colorado or the United States?

The kind of mosquito that can carry Zika virus is called the *Aedes* mosquito. It is found primarily in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. During 2015, Zika virus was discovered in South America for the first time. Since then Zika virus has rapidly spread to many countries in Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Visit www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html to view the affected areas.

Aedes mosquitoes that carry Zika virus are generally not found in Colorado, but are present in the Southeastern United States and parts of California and Texas. The virus has not yet been identified in *Aedes* mosquitoes in the United States. At this time, it is extremely unlikely that someone would become infected with Zika virus from a mosquito bite in Colorado. However, international travelers visiting affected areas may be bitten by infected mosquitoes during their trip and be diagnosed with Zika virus infection when they return to the United States.

What can people do to prevent becoming infected with Zika virus?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus infection. In the areas affected by the outbreak, the best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to avoid being bitten. Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by wearing insect repellent, wearing long pants and long sleeves, stay in places with air conditioning or window screens, or sleep under a mosquito net.

Pregnant women or those who are planning to become pregnant are advised not to travel to affected areas. Those who do travel should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Women who have been in these countries during their pregnancy should discuss the need for Zika virus testing with their doctor.

What is the treatment for Zika virus?

There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat Zika virus infection.

More information is available at:

www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html.



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