

Kent County Health Department
Zika Virus
Fact Sheet



What is Zika Virus Disease?

Zika virus disease 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. While cases of Zika virus disease have recently been identified in the countries of South and Central America, outbreaks of Zika previously have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

How is Zika Virus spread?

Zika virus is spread primarily by the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. Mosquitoes get Zika virus from biting a human that has the virus in its blood. After 8 to 12 days, the mosquito can then give the virus to other people by biting them. The type of mosquitoes that carry Zika virus are from the *Aedes* species. *Aedes* species that carry Zika virus are commonly found in hot and humid areas of the world (tropical and sub-tropical). *Aedes* mosquitoes that carry Zika virus have not yet been found in Michigan.

Can Zika Virus be spread from person to person?

Spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual contact have been reported. In both cases of spread through sexual contact, an infected male spread the virus to his female partner. There have been no cases of spread from an infected female to her male sex partner.

How soon do infected people get sick?

While the exact time between exposure and the onset of symptoms is unknown, it is likely to be a few days to a week.

What are the symptoms of Zika Virus Disease?

Most people who get Zika virus will not have any symptoms – they won't even know they have it. A small number of people who get Zika virus will get a mild illness with:

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint pain
- Red eyes

Symptoms usually last for several days to a week and there are no known long-term effects from a mild illness.

Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for about a week but it can be found longer in some people.

Does Zika Virus cause Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)?

GBS is an uncommon sickness of the nervous system in which a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness, and sometimes, paralysis. GBS symptoms include weakness of the arms and legs that is usually the same on both sides of the body.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention does not yet know if there is a connection between GBS and Zika virus infection. While some people who have been infected with Zika virus also have GBS, the CDC is working to study the possibility of a link between Zika virus and GBS.

Zika Virus Fact Sheet – page 2

Does Zika in pregnant women cause birth defects?

Brazil has been having a significant outbreak of Zika virus since May 2015. Officials in Brazil have also noted an increase in the number of babies with microcephaly (a birth defect in which the size of a baby's head is smaller than expected for age and sex) during that time. Health authorities in Brazil, with assistance from the CDC and other agencies have been investigating the possible association between Zika virus infection and microcephaly.

Who is at most risk for getting Zika Virus?

Currently, there are 26 countries and territories in the Americas with active Zika virus transmission. This region basically spans an area from Mexico to the north to Brazil to the south. Only individuals living in these areas or those who travel to these areas are at risk for becoming infected with Zika virus.

While there have been Zika virus infections in people returning to the United States from these areas, there have been no situations where an individual has become infected in the U.S. without traveling to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission.

How is Zika Virus treated?

There is no vaccine to prevent or specific medicine to treat Zika infections. Zika virus symptoms can be treated by:

- Getting plenty of rest
- Drinking fluids to prevent dehydration
- Taking medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to relieve fever and pain
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen, naproxen)

How can I protect myself from getting Zika Virus?

At this time, there is no risk for individuals to get Zika virus from a mosquito bite that occurs in Michigan. Currently, the *Aedes* mosquitoes that carry Zika virus are not found in the state. Those traveling to other parts of the world, however, should find out if there is currently Zika virus transmission in the country to which they are travelling. The CDC maintains a list of travel notices that should be reviewed before making travel plans:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>

Women who are pregnant or are currently trying to get pregnant should consider delaying travel to countries where Zika virus transmission is present.

Additionally, if male sexual partners of pregnant women have lived in or traveled to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission, they should abstain from sex or correctly use a condom during sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

Non-pregnant individuals who are traveling to areas with Zika virus transmission should take steps to prevent mosquito bites:

- Use a repellent that contains 20% or more **DEET** for protection that lasts up to several hours. Ensure that you can buy these products at your travel destination or check with your airline to ensure that they can be carried in your luggage.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Stay and sleep in screened or air-conditioned rooms.

