

Zika Virus Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Zika virus important to women who are thinking about or trying to get pregnant?

The CDC is investigating a possible link between Zika virus and Guillain-Barré syndrome. Zika virus infections have also been confirmed in several infants with microcephaly; it is not known how many of the microcephaly cases are associated with Zika virus infection. Studies are under way to investigate the association of Zika virus infection and microcephaly, including the role of other contributory factors.

What is the link between Zika and Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?

A rare disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the nervous system, rapidly causing weakness and paralysis. GBS is very likely triggered by Zika in a small proportion of infections, much as it is after a variety of other infections. The CDC is currently investigating the link between Zika and GBS.

Can anyone get microcephaly or Guillain-Barré syndrome from the virus, or just the babies of infected mothers?

All Zika infected individuals are potentially vulnerable to GBS. The CDC is also investigating a link between infection during pregnancy and birth defects including microcephaly.

What is microcephaly?

A condition where a baby is born with an abnormally small head and incomplete brain development.

Is there a trimester of pregnancy more dangerous to being infected with Zika virus?

Pregnant women in any trimester are equally at risk of being infected with the Zika virus.

Is microcephaly something that if not present at birth might show up later in a child's life?

No

What is the Zika Virus?

Zika is a virus spread primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes species* mosquito. These are the same mosquitoes that spread Dengue and Chikungunya viruses. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters, but can also bite at night.

Recent evidence suggests that Zika virus can also be spread through blood transfusion and from mother to child during pregnancy. There is also evidence that the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted by a man to his sex partner(s).

Is it safe to use insect repellent products if I am pregnant?

Yes

Is it safe to breast feed my baby if I have the Zika virus?

Although Zika virus RNA has been detected in breast milk, transmission of Zika infection through breastfeeding has not been documented. Based on available evidence, the benefits of breastfeeding infants outweigh any theoretical risk related to Zika virus infection.

How do I prevent infection of the Zika virus?

Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.
- Reapply insect repellent as directed.
- Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.

How do I prevent my child from being infected with Zika virus?

Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age. Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs, or cover crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting. Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin. Instead, spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face.

What can I (or my family) do to avoid mosquito bites besides using insect spray/repellent?

Wear long-sleeved clothing and pants. Stay in air-conditioned quarters with screened windows, and when feasible, reduce the amount of time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most active. Reducing mosquito breeding sites is also important—the fewer mosquitoes, the less chance of being bitten.

What is the best way to control *Aedes* mosquito populations?

Search for and remove items that collect water such as plastic containers, flower pots, vases, children's toys, old tires, or any other items that can hold water. Clogged gutters can also serve as breeding sites.

Are there specific areas in the U.S. that are more susceptible to the spread of the Zika virus?

Yes, areas will include those where the *Aedes* mosquitoes remains active year round, such as Puerto Rico, Florida, and the southernmost border of the U.S.

Do all prevention and protection measures work on all mosquitoes?

In general, yes. However, due to differences between mosquito species, some protection practices are more or less effective. The "best practices" of wearing permethrin-treated clothing, using DEET or Picaridin products on all exposed skin, and removing standing water will prevent bites from most mosquitoes.

Are you immune for life once infected?

According to the CDC, once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

Is it possible to get Zika and not know you have it?

Yes. About 80% of people who are infected with Zika will never have symptoms.

Is the Zika virus transmitted person to person?

In rare cases, Zika virus can be transmitted by blood transfusion or sexual contact. The most common route of infection is through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Is the Zika virus transmitted by saliva?

Although Zika virus has been found in saliva, there are no reports of it being transmitted this way.

Can I donate blood?

Yes, however after returning from regions affected by Zika, the American Red Cross has asked blood donors to wait 28 days. If you were in a region that also has malaria, you may be asked to wait at least a year before donating blood.

Can I get Zika from a blood transfusion?

While not common, there have been reports of Zika virus infection through blood transfusion. Therefore the FDA requires a 28-day deferral after travel to a Zika-affected area before a person can donate blood.

Are there complications from Zika virus infection?

There is no evidence of long-term health effects of Zika virus disease. There have been cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome reported in patients following suspected Zika virus infection. The relationship between Zika virus infection and Guillain-Barré syndrome is not known.

Why does the Zika virus pose such a big problem to pregnant women?

No evidence exists to suggest that pregnant women are more susceptible or experience more severe disease during pregnancy. It is not known if pregnant women are more susceptible to Guillain-Barré syndrome. However, there have been reports of congenital microcephaly and other neurological complications in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Scientists are working to better understand the full spectrum of outcomes that might be associated with Zika virus infections during pregnancy.

If a woman is trying to get pregnant, and becomes infected with the Zika virus, how long before she can safely try to get pregnant again?

Zika virus usually remains in the blood for one week. There is no evidence that the virus will cause birth defects in babies that were conceived after the virus has cleared the mother's blood.

If I am active duty should I be wearing a permethrin-treated maternity uniform?

Yes, if you are in an area with active Zika virus transmission. A permethrin-treated uniform as part of the DoD Insect Repellent System is your best defense against infected mosquitoes. If your uniform is not treated with permethrin (maternity or untreated ACU) and you and your healthcare provider decide that wearing an ACU with permethrin is the best choice, you can learn how to treat your ACU by visiting: <http://go.usa.gov/cymwB>. Never apply permethrin solution directly to the skin.

Points of Contact:

Army Public Health Center (Provisional), Health Risk Communication Program (HRCP)

usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.hrcp-office@mail.mil

(Comm) 410-436-3515

(DSN) 584-3515

US Army Medical Command Directorate of Communications

usarmy.jbsa.medcom.mbx.otsg-dir-dcomm-ops@mail.mil

(Comm) 703-681-8630