



Zika Virus Disease (Zika)

What is Zika?

Zika is a virus that is primarily spread through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. Zika virus can cause a mild illness known as Zika virus disease. If a pregnant woman is infected with Zika virus, her baby may be born with severe birth defects as a result of the infection. A commonly reported birth defect is microcephaly, where a baby is born with an abnormally small head and has likely brain damage as a result.

Who is at risk for Zika?

Anyone traveling to or living in an area where Zika virus is found and who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk. A man infected with Zika virus can pass it to his female or male sex partners. A person who has unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex with a man who recently traveled to an area where Zika virus is found is at risk for Zika virus infection.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other symptoms include muscle pain and headache. Symptoms are usually mild and last from several days to a week. Many people infected with Zika virus do not have any symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The time from exposure to when symptoms appear is not known. Similar viruses cause symptoms in a few days to a week or two after exposure, and the assumption is that it would be similar for Zika.

How is Zika spread?

Zika virus is primarily spread through the bite of an *Aedes aegypti*, or possibly an *Aedes albopictus*, mosquito, neither of which are found in North Dakota.

Zika can also be spread by a man infected with Zika to his sexual partners. Zika virus can be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Zika can cause microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. There are no reports of infants contracting Zika virus through breastfeeding. There is a strong possibility that Zika can be spread through blood transfusions.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

Zika is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes, through sex with an infected male, and rarely through blood transfusions. It can also be transmitted from an infected mother to her fetus during pregnancy and to the baby during birth. During the first week after contracting Zika, the virus can be found in the blood and passed to another person through mosquito bites or from a pregnant woman to her fetus. It is currently unknown how long the virus can survive in semen, but we do know that it remains in semen longer than in blood.

How is a person diagnosed?

Laboratory tests can detect the presence of the virus in your body.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus disease. The symptoms can be relieved by drinking fluids to prevent dehydration, getting plenty of rest, and taking acetaminophen or paracetamol to reduce fever and pain. Do not take aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) until dengue can be ruled out to avoid the possibility of internal or external bleeding.

Does past infection make a person immune?

While this is not known for certain, based on how similar infections affect immunity, it is likely that once you are infected with Zika virus, you will be protected from future infections.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have Zika?

No. Infants, toddlers, and school-aged children should not be excluded unless the staff determines the child is unwilling or unable to participate in activities. Children also should be excluded if the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group. All others can attend work and other functions as long as they are well enough to do so. There is no risk of Zika infection spreading during normal daily activities.

What can be done to prevent Zika virus infection?

The best way to prevent Zika virus infection is to avoid mosquito bites in places where Zika virus is found:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol and follow the product label instructions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that have window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available, or if sleeping outdoors
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items

If you are infected with Zika, prevent the spread of the disease by avoiding mosquito bites during the first week of infection, which is when the virus will be present in your blood. Even if you do not feel sick, if you are returning to the United States from an area where Zika is present, take steps to prevent mosquito bites for three weeks. This will prevent native mosquitoes from biting you and passing the virus to someone else.

People whose male sex partners have traveled to or live in an area with Zika are at risk for contracting Zika virus through sex. Abstaining from sex is the only way to guarantee that a man infected with Zika virus does not spread Zika to his sex partners. The timeframe for using condoms or waiting to have sex varies based on the couple's situation, and concerns and should be discussed with a health care provider.

Pregnant women or those trying to become pregnant should avoid traveling to Zika-affected countries. If you must travel, talk to your healthcare provider before and after your trip.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/zika or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resources:

1. Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 30th ed. [Children in Out-Of-Home Care]. Kimberlin, DW; Brady, MT; Jackson, MA; Long, SS. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2015: 132-151.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Zika. www.cdc.gov/zika.