

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.

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.

Can someone who has lived in or traveled to an affected area cause a Zika virus outbreak in Michigan?

Currently, the mosquitoes that carry Zika virus have not been found in Michigan. This makes it very unlikely that a case of Zika virus

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infection in Michigan will result in local spread. Public health officials will continually monitor the situation and inform the public if the need arises.

Should I travel to an area with Zika Virus?

Those traveling to other parts of the world, 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>

Zika Virus is a mild infection and for the majority of healthy individuals, does not pose a serious health risk. Choosing to travel to an area with Zika virus is a personal choice that should be made after considering the potential risks. All individuals who travel to these areas should take steps to prevent mosquito bites.

There are certain individuals, however, who should consider postponing travel to these areas.

Women who are pregnant or are currently trying to get pregnant should consider delaying travel to countries where Zika virus transmission is present. If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

It is currently unknown how long Zika virus remains in the semen of an infected male. Therefore, **male sexual partners of pregnant women or women who are trying to get pregnant** should take this into consideration when making their travel decisions.

Steps to prevent mosquito bites during travel

- 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.

What should I do if I've lived in or traveled to an area with Zika Virus?

Monitor your health for symptoms of Zika virus infection. If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Men who have a pregnant sexual partner should abstain from sex or correctly use a condom during sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that Zika virus poses a risk for birth defects after it is cleared from a woman's blood. However, since it is unknown how long the virus remains in the semen of infected males, men who have traveled to an area with Zika virus should correctly use a condom during sex. Women desiring to get pregnant after their male sex partner has returned from these areas should talk to their healthcare provider.

Pregnant women with a history of travel to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission can be tested if:

- They have two or more symptoms of Zika virus infection
- Do not have symptoms and are within 2-12 weeks after their return from travel.

Pregnant women wishing to be tested should talk to their healthcare provider. KCHD staff are available to answer questions about testing and can be reached by calling 616-632-7228.

