



Zika Virus Fact Sheet

ORIGINS: Zika is a disease caused by the Zika virus, usually spread through the bite of an infected “Aedes” species mosquito. The Zika virus was first discovered in Uganda in 1947. The first human cases of Zika were reported in 1952. Cases originated in Tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and in the Pacific Islands. In May 2015, the first confirmed Zika infection in Brazil was discovered. The World Health Organization declared the Zika virus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

HOW IT’S SPREAD: Zika virus is spread to people mainly through the bite of an infected “Aedes” species mosquito (*A. aegypti* and *A. albopictus*). These are the same mosquitoes that spread Dengue and Chikungunya viruses. “Aedes” mosquitoes usually lay eggs in and near standing water (buckets, bowls, animal dishes, flower pots, pools). They prefer to bite people, and live indoors or outdoors near people. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with Zika. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through their bite. Zika can also be spread through sexual contact, organ transplant, blood transfusions and from an infected mother to her newborn.

SYMPTOMS: Most people infected with Zika won’t know because they won’t have any symptoms. However, some common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain or conjunctivitis, muscle pain and headache. When symptoms do happen, they are usually mild and last several days to a week.

TREATMENT: There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika infections. To treat the symptoms get rest, drink fluids, and take acetaminophen. Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

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RISK REDUCTION: Maryland residents can reduce their risk of infection with Zika virus by taking these steps to protect themselves.

When traveling to Zika affected areas:

- 1) Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when going outdoors. Aedes species mosquitoes are aggressive day biters.
- 2) Use an EPA-registered insect repellent and follow the instructions on the product label. Repellents containing DEET are safe for adults and children when used according to package directions.
- 3) Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and unable to protect yourself from mosquito bites.
- 4) Consider postponing travel to Zika affected areas if you are pregnant until more is known about associated birth defects and Zika virus.
- 5) Use condoms when returning from Zika endemic areas so as not to spread the Zika virus. Zika can be spread through sexual contact.
- 6) Avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness if you become infected with the Zika virus. This will help prevent others from getting sick.

Ways to eliminate mosquito breeding sites around your home:

- 1) Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.
- 2) Clean clogged gutters in the spring and the fall. Make sure that roof gutters drain properly.
- 3) Drain water from pool covers.
- 4) Remove outdoor pet food and water dishes that are not being used.
- 5) Do not leave garbage can lids upside down. Do not let water collect in the bottom of garbage cans or recycle bins.
- 6) Check ornamental ponds, tree holes, and water-holding low areas for mosquito larvae.
- 7) Eliminate any standing water that collects on your property.
- 8) Remove all discarded tires from your property. If removal is not possible, puncture or cut tires to prevent water from collecting in them.
- 9) Remind or help neighbors to eliminate breeding sites on their property.

Visit the MDA Mosquito Control website at <http://www.mda.state.md.us> if you have questions about mosquito control.

You can contact the Worcester County Health Department at 410-632-1100, or visit our website at www.worcesterhealth.org

For more information about Zika virus, please visit the Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne website at <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/pages/zika.aspx>