

ZIKA INFORMATION FOR WORKERS

Zika data as of 6/13/16

WHAT IS ZIKA?

The Zika virus disease is caused by the Zika virus. It is transmitted to people mainly through the bite of *Aedes* mosquitoes. The virus was first discovered in 1947.

Outbreaks have been reported in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Because Zika symptoms are like those of other diseases, many cases may not have been recognized. In 2015, the first confirmed Zika virus infection was documented in Brazil. Local transmission has been reported in many other countries and territories, and the Zika virus will likely continue to spread to new areas. Zika cases have been reported in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

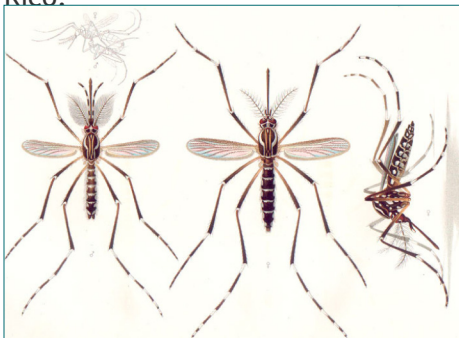


Figure 1. Adults of the yellow fever mosquito *A. aegypti*: The male is on the left, females are on the right. Only the female mosquito bites humans to transmit the disease.



Figure 2. *Aedes aegypti* feeding

HOW IS ZIKA TRANSMITTED?

Zika virus can be spread by:

- 1) Mosquitoes.** *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (commonly known as yellow fever mosquitoes) are typically concentrated in the southern U.S. as well as parts of the Southwest. *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes

(known as Asian Tiger mosquitoes) are found in much of the southern and eastern part of the U.S. Both are found to carry the virus.

These mosquitoes lay eggs in and near standing water in buckets, bowls, animal dishes, flower pots and vases. The mosquito bites an infected person, and the virus can be spread when the infected mosquito bites other people. These same mosquitoes also spread other diseases, such as dengue fever and chikungunya.

- 2) Mother to child.** Transmission can occur during pregnancy or around the time of birth. At the present time there are no reports of transmission through breastfeeding.
- 3) Sexual contact.** An infected man can spread the virus to sex partners; in most cases, but not all, the infected man had symptoms.
- 4) Bloodborne exposure.** Zika can be spread from bloodborne and other infectious body fluid exposures, like needle sticks or splashes.
- 5) Blood transfusion.** While there are no confirmed cases in the U.S., some have been reported in Brazil.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR CONTRACTING ZIKA?

People who live in, or travel to an area where the Zika virus is found and they were not already infected, are at risk. For information on Zika-infected areas, go to 1.usa.gov/1teQiNo or you can also check the CDC map at 1.usa.gov/25K83SB for information on U.S. areas and territories.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ZIKA INFECTION?

Most people who get infected with Zika don't get sick, so they don't know they have the disease. The time from infection to illness (called the incubation period),



is not known, but is believed to be a few days to a week. The Zika virus remains in the blood for about a week, but it can be longer for some people.

The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle pain and headache. These symptoms are usually mild and last for several days to a week.

People usually don't go to the hospital with Zika, and they **very rarely** die of Zika. Once a person has been infected, they are likely to be protected from future Zika infections.

A small number of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) cases have been associated with Zika. Guillain-Barré is a rare disorder in which the body's immune system attacks the nerves.

Zika virus can also be spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus, and has been linked to a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly in babies of mothers who are infected with the Zika virus while pregnant. CDC recommends special precautions for women who are or may become pregnant. Click on 1.usa.gov/1X8RCNR for more information on Zika and pregnancy. See your doctor or other healthcare provider if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes within two weeks after traveling to a place where Zika has been reported.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

If you live in, or travel to a Zika-infected area and have symptoms, see a doctor; blood tests will confirm if you have been infected.

At present, there is NO vaccine, or specific medicine to treat Zika.

To recover from Zika infection, get rest, drink plenty of fluids, take acetaminophen to relieve fever and pain. Don't take aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatories until you've spoken with your physician or healthcare provider and let them know if you are taking other medications.

To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of infection. To help prevent transmission to partners via sexual contact, abstain from sexual activity or use condoms during sexual activity during and following infection. For specific recommendations to prevent sexual

transmission, please visit the CDC Zika and Sexual Transmission page at 1.usa.gov/1tePQig

HOW CAN WORKERS BE EXPOSED TO ZIKA?

Workers who are exposed while at work to mosquitoes, or to blood or other body fluids of persons infected with Zika, may be at risk for Zika infection.

OUTDOOR WORKERS may be at risk of exposure to the Zika virus.

Employers should:

- 1) provide workers with information about Zika, and their risk of exposure;
- 2) provide workers with insect repellents, and encourage their use according to instructions;
- 3) provide workers with, and encourage them to wear, lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that covers their hands, arms, legs, ankles and feet, and other exposed skin;
- 4) provide workers with adequate water, rest and shade, and monitor workers for signs and symptoms of heat illness;
- 5) get rid of sources of standing water (e.g., tires, buckets, cans, bottles, barrels) whenever possible to reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding areas;
- 6) train workers about the importance of eliminating areas where mosquitoes can breed;
- 7) if requested by a worker, consider reassigning to indoor tasks, anyone who indicates she is or may become pregnant, or who is male and has a sexual partner who is or may become pregnant.

Women workers should talk to their supervisor(s) about any outdoor work assignment(s) if they are or may become pregnant; the same is advised for males, if their sexual partner is or may become pregnant.

For more information, go to NYCOSH's *Information about Zika for Outdoor Workers* factsheet at bit.ly/28Lb01r.



HEALTHCARE WORKERS CAN ALSO BE AT RISK OF EXPOSURE.

Employers should:

- 1) Ensure that universal precautions are followed for potential bloodborne pathogen (BBP) exposures, as described in OSHA's BBP standard (29 CFR 1910.1030);
- 2) Expand universal precautions to include standard precautions by adding several protections. Standard precautions include, but are not limited to, hand hygiene and using personal protective equipment (PPE – gloves, gowns, masks and eye protection) to avoid direct contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials.
- 3) Ensure that employees wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60 percent alcohol. Soap and water are best for hands that are visibly soiled. Hands must be washed before and after any contact with a patient, after any contact with potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removing PPE, including gloves.
- 4) Ensure that laboratory facilities and practices meet the appropriate Biosafety Level (BSL) for the type of work being conducted in the laboratory.
- 5) Ensure that sharps with engineered sharps injury protection (SESIP) are used, and needles are not bent or recapped. All must be properly disposed of in closable, puncture-resistant, leakproof, and labeled or color-coded containers.
- 6) Ensure that all needlesticks, lacerations, and other exposure incidents are reported to supervisors as soon as possible.

For more information on healthcare worker protections, see CDC's *Zika and Healthcare Providers* information at [1.usa.gov/1TXC8Mg](https://www.cdc.gov/1TXC8Mg) and the OSHA/NIOSH interim guidance at [1.usa.gov/1XB04pY](https://www.osha-slc.gov/1XB04pY)

IN ADDITION, WORKERS WHO TRAVEL TO ZIKA-AFFECTED AREAS ARE AT RISK.

CDC guidance for travel to Zika-affected areas may also help employers and workers in travel-related operations, such as airlines, airline crew members, and cruise line workers take appropriate protective actions. [1.usa.gov/1Y6xN9b](https://www.cdc.gov/1Y6xN9b)

Employers should be flexible in requiring travel to Zika-affected areas for workers who are concerned about possible exposure, as flexible travel and leave policies may help control the spread of the virus.

Consider delaying travel to Zika-affected areas, especially for workers who are or may become pregnant or whose sexual partners may become pregnant; CDC recommends that pregnant women in any trimester not travel to an area with active Zika virus transmission. See more information on CDC's Zika Travel Information page. More information can also be found on the CDC Zika and Pregnancy webpage. [1.usa.gov/1X8RCNR](https://www.cdc.gov/1X8RCNR)

If someone is infected with Zika at work, they can file a claim for workers' compensation to recover any lost pay and personal sick days, and to cover all medical expenses, both short and long-term, relating to their illness.

If the exposure falls under OSHA's BBP standard (29 CFR 1910.1030), employers must comply with medical evaluation and follow-up requirements. (See 29 CFR 1910.1030(f).)

Paragraph 11(c) of the OSH Act prohibits employers from retaliating against workers for raising concerns about safety and health conditions. Workers who are retaliated against can submit a complaint to OSHA within 30 days of when the retaliation took place.

For more information on Zika:

US Centers for Diseases Control - [cdc.gov/zika/](https://www.cdc.gov/zika/)

New York State Department of Health - [on.ny.gov/1Y6y7Vk](https://www.health.ny.gov/1Y6y7Vk)

New York City Department of Health - [on.nyc.gov/1TTIJSw](https://www.nyc.gov/1TTIJSw)

NYCOSH's Zika for Healthcare Factsheet - [bit.ly/28S9wR4](https://www.nycosh.org/bit.ly/28S9wR4)

REFERENCES

U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Zika Virus. [1.usa.gov/1Zv7N61](https://www.cdc.gov/1Zv7N61)

OSHA/NIOSH Interim Guidance for Protecting Workers from Occupational Exposure to Zika Virus. [1.usa.gov/1XB04pY](https://www.osha-slc.gov/1XB04pY)

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