

The Zika virus is not new. It was first discovered almost 70 years ago. However, the recent outbreak in the Americas has led to the discovery of a link between Zika virus infection and rare but serious complications including severe birth defects and Guillain-Barre syndrome.

SYMPTOMS

If symptoms occur they are typically mild and can last several days up to a week. The most common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint and muscle pain
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache

COMPLICATIONS

In rare cases infected individuals may develop Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS), an autoimmune condition that can cause temporary partial paralysis. The elderly are more likely to develop severe cases of GBS.

If a woman becomes infected during her pregnancy, her fetus may develop serious birth defects including microcephaly (an unusually small head). Because the brain is not fully developed in cases of microcephaly, accompanying conditions can include developmental delays, intellectual disability, seizure disorders, hearing and vision loss, etc.

TRANSMISSION

Zika virus routes of transmission include:

- Mosquito bite
- Unprotected sex with an infected individual, even if the infected individual has no symptoms
- Pregnant woman to fetus
- Blood transfusion or other bloodborne exposure

TREATMENT

There is currently no vaccine to prevent Zika infection. Recommended care includes:

- Rest
- Fluids to prevent dehydration
- Acetaminophen or paracetamol to reduce fever and pain

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found and has not already been infected with Zika virus can get it from mosquito bites.
- Anyone who has unprotected sex (without a condom) with an infected person can be infected (even if the infected sexual partner has no symptoms).
- There is a small risk of infection through exposure to blood or bodily fluids infected with the Zika virus.
- Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

INFECTION PREVENTION

Spread of the Zika virus CAN be prevented through:

- Mosquito control
- Education on the risks of travel to areas where mosquitos are transmitting Zika
- Sexual education and condom distribution
- Blood supply testing
- Strict adherence to universal and standard precautions in the healthcare setting

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

According to the CDC, federal funds to help states fight Zika are almost completely depleted. Congress has refused to approve requests for further funding. Call your congressional representative and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan to demand that President Obama's bill to fund Zika infection control programs be passed immediately. Our most vulnerable citizens, babies and the elderly, are at greatest risk of serious complications from Zika infection. Congress must act to protect public health.

TELL CONGRESS: FUND THE ZIKA FIGHT! CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE AND HOUSE SPEAKER RYAN TODAY AT (202) 224-3121