



Zika Virus Fact Sheet – July 2016

General Information

Zika is a virus that is transmitted primarily through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other persons through bites. Direct human-to-human transmission of Zika virus can occur through sexual contact and from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause severe birth defects, including microcephaly. Zika virus is not transmitted directly from one person to another through casual contact.

Most persons infected with Zika virus will not have symptoms; among those who do become ill, the most common signs and symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis, and these usually occur within a week of infection. The illness is typically mild, with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. Most children and adults infected with Zika virus do not become ill enough to seek medical care or require hospitalization, and death from Zika virus infection is rare. There is currently no vaccine or specific drug to prevent or treat Zika virus infection.

In light of the ongoing outbreak in the Region of the Americas and Pacific Islands, the number of Zika virus disease cases among travelers visiting or returning to the United States likely will increase.

School Considerations

There is no evidence that risk for transmission on school properties will be higher than in other areas of the local community. If suspected or confirmed Zika virus infection occurs in a student or staff member, schools should continue to prioritize strategies to prevent mosquito bites on school grounds, to prevent further transmission through infected mosquitoes. Because Zika virus is not transmitted from person to person by casual contact, it is not necessary to issue a schoolwide notification, and students or staff members with travel-related Zika virus exposure or confirmed Zika virus infection do not need to be removed from school. Isolation of persons with Zika virus disease or quarantine of exposed persons is neither recommended nor appropriate. Schools should maintain privacy and nondiscrimination protections for all students and employees. In the case of local Zika virus transmission, it is not necessary to cancel school-related activities.

Planning for Possible Zika Virus Transmission in K–12 Schools

Prevention of mosquito bites through an integrated vector management plan is of paramount importance for avoiding Zika virus infections. Schools can help to reduce risk for students, families, and the community by implementing mosquito control measures on school grounds, such as identifying and removing sources of standing water that can serve as mosquito breeding sites. Common sources on school grounds can include buckets, trash cans, planters, tires, tall grasses, playground equipment, and spaces beneath temporary modular structures. Adjustments can be made to ensure these do not become mosquito breeding areas, including regularly cleaning, turning over, tightly covering, or completely removing (if appropriate) these sources; sweeping away pools of water; and keeping all grassy areas mowed (including less-traveled and hard-to-access areas such as under bleachers). In addition, efforts should be made to prevent mosquitoes from entering classrooms by placing new screens or replacing damaged screens in windows and doors, or by using air conditioning when available.

The use of other methods of mosquito control in a school or community, including insecticide spraying, is decided upon by the local and state jurisdictions. The public health and school partnership can work with local government officials to learn which approaches are available and appropriate to prevent transmission of Zika and other mosquito-borne viruses, such as West Nile.

When possible, students, staff members, and family members participating in outdoor activities in areas with mosquito activity should be advised to follow CDC Zika virus prevention guidelines, including wearing long pants and sleeves and using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–registered insect repellents, all of which are considered safe for school-aged children and pregnant women. Schools should review and, if necessary, update their policies regarding student possession and application of insect repellent, and inform students, their caregivers, and staff members of updated plans or policies. Administrators might also need to consider logistical issues involved, including purchasing responsibilities for repellents and the processes for applying them to large groups of children when necessary. Schools should consider risk for potential exposure to mosquito-borne diseases when planning field trips and other school-sponsored travel as the mosquitoes that transmit Zika virus are more active during the day.

Additional Resources

- <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/schools.html> - CDC Zika Website for Schools
- <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/toolkits.html> - CDC Zika Communication Toolkits
- <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/mosqprevinus.pdf> - CDC How to Protect Against Mosquito Bites
- http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/zika_protect_yourself_from_mosquito_bites.pdf - CDC Protect Yourself from Mosquito Bites