



## Epidemiology Unit

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# Zika Virus Fact Sheet

## Zika virus

Zika virus is an emerging mosquito-borne virus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947. Outbreaks of Zika virus disease have been recorded in Africa, America, Asia and the Pacific. Zika virus is a member of Flaviviridae family and transmitted by Aedes species mosquitoes. It causes mild illness known as Zika fever, Zika or Zika disease. Currently, outbreaks are occurring in Brazil and Colombia. In addition more than 13 countries in the Americas have reported sporadic Zika virus infections indicating rapid geographic expansion of Zika virus.

## Transmission

Zika virus is transmitted to humans primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito. These are the same mosquitoes that spread [dengue](#), [chikungunya](#) and yellow fever. Aedes mosquitoes are daytime biters who prefer to bite people and live indoors and outdoors near people. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites.

## Symptoms

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus will develop the disease. The most common symptoms are fever, macula-papular skin rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include headache, muscle pain, retro-orbital pain and ankle oedema. The illness is usually mild symptoms lasting from 2-7 days. Severe disease due to Zika virus disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Deaths are rare. Incubation period of Zika virus disease is not clear, but is likely to be a few days to a week. Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for a few days but it can be found longer in some people.

## Diagnosis

Case definition of suspected Zika disease is “patients with acute fever, rash, myalgia, arthralgia and have travelled within the previous two weeks to an area with ongoing transmission of Zika”. Zika virus is diagnosed through PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) and virus isolation from blood samples.

## **Treatment**

Zika virus disease is usually mild and does not require specific treatment. There is no vaccine or medication available to treat the Zika disease. Treatment is based on symptoms; get plenty of rest, drink adequate fluid to prevent dehydration, take medicines to relieve symptoms (Paracetamol to relieve fever and pain). Taking aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen and naproxen is not recommended. If symptoms are worsening contact your physician immediately.

## **Prevention**

Prevention and control relies on reducing mosquitoes through source reduction and reducing contact between mosquitoes and people. Mosquitoes that spread Zika virus disease bite mostly during the daytime. During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another mosquito through mosquito bites. An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people. Zika virus disease can be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites. This can be done by using insect repellent; wearing clothes (preferably light-coloured) that cover as much of the body as possible; using physical barriers such as screens, closed doors and windows; and sleeping under mosquito nets. It is also important to empty, clean or cover containers that can hold water such as buckets, flower pots or tyres, so that places where mosquitoes can breed are removed. There is no vaccine available to prevent Zika virus disease.