Zika Virus

What Is Zika Virus?

Zika virus is an illness spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Zika virus is also spread through:

- **Pregnancy**. Zika virus can pass from mother to child during pregnancy. This can cause serious birth defects.
- **Sexual contact**. A man with Zika virus can spread it to his sexual partners through vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

Zika virus is spreading through South and Central America, and other tropical parts of the world. You can visit www.cdc.gov/zika for up-to-date information about where cases of Zika virus have been identified.

What Are the Warning Signs of Zika Virus?

Many people infected with Zika virus have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. The most common symptoms are:

- Fever
- Joint pain
- Muscle pain
- Rash
- Red eyes
- Headache

In rare cases, Zika virus can cause nerve damage, called Guillain-Barré (gee-yan buh-rey) syndrome.

How Is Zika Virus Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask about your medical history and recent travel.
- Zika virus can be confirmed through lab tests. Your doctor may test your blood, urine, or saliva for signs of Zika virus.

How Is Zika Virus Treated?

- Zika virus usually goes away without treatment. If you have symptoms of Zika virus, it's important to get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Your doctor may suggest medicines for pain or fever.
- If your symptoms do not go away after a week or get worse, follow up with your doctor.

How Can I Protect Myself?

If you are travelling somewhere where Zika virus is widespread, take steps to protect yourself:

- Use a mosquito repellant that has DEET, picaridin, IR535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol. For more information, visit https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Use permethrin spray to repel mosquitos from your clothes. Always follow label instructions.
- Stay in places with air-conditioning and door and window screens. Use a bed net if that is not possible.
- Prevent the spread of Zika through sexual contact. Use condoms every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex or do not have sex.
- If you are pregnant, do not travel to areas where Zika virus is widespread.
- If you are trying to get pregnant, talk to your doctor or health care professional before you or your partner travels.

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Questions for My Doctor

- Am I at risk for Zika virus?
- Is there a vaccine?
- I am pregnant but have to travel to a country where Zika virus is widespread. What should I do?
- How long does Zika virus stay in your body?
- How long should I wait to get pregnant after traveling to a place where Zika virus is widespread?

Bottom Line

- Zika virus is spread mainly through mosquito bites. Humans can spread it to other humans through pregnancy, sexual contact, or blood transfusions.
- Many people do not even know they have Zika virus. Common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes.
- Zika virus can be diagnosed by testing your blood, urine, or saliva.
- Zika virus usually goes away without treatment.
- If you are traveling to a place where Zika virus is widespread, take steps to protect yourself.

For More Information

- **Centers for Disease Control:** https://www.cdc.gov/zika/
- **World Health Organization:** www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/

Notes:

The content contained herein is for information purposes only and should not be construed as medical advice. You should always consult your physician for clinical judgment and direction.

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