



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION

Important Information for All First Responders about the Zika virus disease (Zika):

The type of mosquito that carries the virus, the *Aedes* mosquito, is not present in Connecticut and the risk of coming in contact with persons infected with the Zika virus in Connecticut is minimal at this time. However, due to its recent appearance in heavily populated areas and its association with birth abnormalities, the World Health Organization recently designated the Zika virus as a global public health emergency.

The purpose of this document is to provide facts about the virus including the degree to which it may be transmitted, and guidance for First Responders who may come in contact with an individual suspected of carrying the virus.

What is Zika virus disease?

Zika is a disease caused by Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually do not get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

Four out of five people who have the virus will never develop symptoms. About one in five people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, headache and/or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is not normally transmitted from person to person. It is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that spread Chikungunya and dengue. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters but they can also bite at night. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. It can also be transmitted from a

pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. The CDC is studying how some mothers can pass the virus to their babies.

Who is at risk of being infected?

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 *Aedes* mosquito bites.

What can First Responders do to prevent becoming infected with Zika?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your co-workers and family from mosquito bites. Here's how:

- ✓ Wear long sleeved shirts and slacks.
- ✓ Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellants. All EPA-registered insect repellants are evaluated for safety and effectiveness. Go to:
<http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellants/find-insect-repellant-right-you>.
 - Always follow the product label instructions.
 - Reapply insect repellant as directed.
 - Do not spray repellant on the skin under clothing.
 - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellant.
- ✓ Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated items.
- ✓ Whenever possible, stay in a screened area, avoid standing water, and practice other common sense mosquito-control strategies, on and off the job.

Are there precautions that First Responders should take when interacting with persons who may be infected?

There have been no reported cases of Zika virus in Connecticut. Should the virus appear in Connecticut, or individuals suspect they could possibly be infected; it is prudent to inquire about recent travel to endemic areas, and to notify responding emergency medical personnel.

While interacting with any suspected or Zika-infected person, follow standard infectious disease procedures: Avoid contact with blood or other bodily fluids and use basic infection control procedures including vigorous handwashing and wearing and prescribed disposal of protective gloves and clothing.

First responders should also strive to stay current in the evolution of this and other viruses. As more information becomes available, practice recommendations may change. For now, it is recommended that First Responders continuously review basic infection control procedures, proper body substance isolation, and disinfection procedures.

What is the treatment for Zika?

There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat Zika virus infections. Treat the symptoms:

- ✓ Get plenty of rest.
- ✓ Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- ✓ Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain.
- ✓ Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- ✓ As always, if you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk with your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.

How is Zika diagnosed?

See your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms; usually, rash, fever, joint pain, headache and/or red eyes. Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika or other similar viral diseases like dengue and chikungunya.

If you come upon a patient with any of these symptoms, ask whether he or she has recently traveled, convey this information to responding emergency medical personnel.

What should I do if I have Zika?

Treat the symptoms:

- ✓ Get plenty of rest.
- ✓ Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- ✓ Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain.
- ✓ Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- ✓ As always, if you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk with your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.

Protect others:

During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another person through mosquito bites. An infected mosquito can spread the virus to other people. To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness.

See your healthcare provider if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain, headache or red eyes within two weeks after travelling to a place where Zika has been reported. Be sure to tell your health care provider where you travelled.

Is there a vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika?

No. there is no vaccine to prevent infection or medicine to treat Zika.

Once infected, is that person immune for life?

Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

Is this a new virus?

No. outbreaks of Zika have been reported previously in tropical Africa, Southeastern Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Zika virus will likely continue to spread to new areas.

Where can I get additional information?

For current travel information, go to: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

For up-to-date information about the prevalence of Zika virus disease in the United States, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/united-states.html>.

For informational fact sheets and posters, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/fs-posters/index.html>.

For additional information about symptoms, diagnosis and treatment, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/index.html>.

For additional information about prevention, go to: <http://www/cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>.

For additional information for pregnant women, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/index.html>.

For information specific to Connecticut, go to: www.ct.gov/dph/zika.