

Zika Virus: Spotlight

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Zika virus, a *flavivirus*, similar to *dengue fever*, largely transmitted to humans via the bite of infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes but can also occur through intrauterine infection leads to microcephaly among newborns. A recent outbreak occurred in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India with total of 123 reported cases (*Economic Times, October 21, 2018*). Sexual transmission of virus has also been reported from infected men and women to their sexual partners via anal, oral and vaginal route.

Zika virus was first reported in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys, later identified in humans in 1952. The first large outbreak of disease caused by Zika infection was reported from the island of Yap in 2007 (WHO).

Symptoms of the virus include mild fever, headache, and rash, itching all over the body, joint pain (with possible swelling, mainly in the smaller joints of the hands and feet), lower back pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes) and last around two to seven days. In adults, it cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS).

Diagnosis of *Zika* can be done through a blood test. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides an updated list- (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>) of countries where *Zika* outbreaks have occurred. Pregnant women should take precautions to prevent mosquito bites and also speak to their obstetrician-gynecologist if she travels to an affected area.

There is no specific treatment for *Zika virus*. Drinking plenty of water and taking paracetamol may help relieve from the disease.

There is currently no vaccine or antiviral treatment for *Zika* disease so, efforts have

focused on preventing mosquito bites and advising pregnant women to avoid areas of *Zika* virus transmission. Educate to patients about preventive measures of *Zika* offers the best option to avoid *Zika virus* infection. There are following some simple steps to protect yourself and your loved ones from the *Zika virus*:

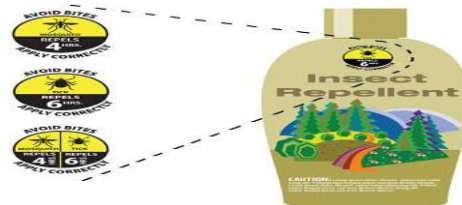


Fig1. Apply EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) -approved insect repellent



Fig2. Drain off standing water in cans, bottles, buckets, tires, wheel barrows or any other container that can hold water



Fig3. Wear clothing that covers hands, arms, legs, and exposed skin by use of hats, socks and mosquito nets.



Fig4. Prevent the spread of the virus through sex by using condoms, especially during pregnancy, if you or your sexual partner may have been exposed to Zika.

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