



THE NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH
and MENTAL HYGIENE

Zika Virus

What is Zika virus?

Zika is a virus spread to people through bites of infected mosquitoes.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus disease?

Up to 80% of people who are infected do not become sick. For the 20% who do become sick, the most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms begin 2 – 12 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. The illness may be mistaken for [dengue virus](#) or [chikungunya virus](#), two other mosquito-borne diseases.

How dangerous is this disease?

Most people fully recover and do not need to be hospitalized. However, several months following the outbreak of Zika in Brazil, a large increase in the number of babies born with a congenital birth defect called microcephaly was observed. Microcephaly describes a baby or child with a smaller than normal head. A study is being done to see if the increase in reports of babies with microcephaly is due to an infection with Zika virus during pregnancy as this complication had not been previously reported with Zika virus. Other causes of microcephaly are also being investigated. In addition, during an outbreak in French Polynesia that caused approximately 20,000 cases, there were reports of neurologic diseases such as Guillain-Barre syndrome as well as central nervous system malformations in newborn babies.

Where is Zika virus found?

Outbreaks of Zika have occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Because the mosquitoes that spread Zika virus are found throughout the world, it is likely that outbreaks will spread to new countries.

In December 2015, Puerto Rico reported its first confirmed case of Zika virus disease. Locally transmitted Zika has not been reported elsewhere in the United States, but cases have been reported in returning travelers. For an updated list, visit the [CDC website](#).

Are New Yorkers at risk?

New Yorkers who travel to affected areas are potentially at risk. Advice for travelers is described below. New Yorkers who do not travel to Brazil or another affected area are not currently at risk. The virus has not been identified anywhere in the continental United States. Puerto Rico recently reported a locally acquired case. The mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, thought to be responsible for spreading the disease in Latin America is not found in NYC.

How can I protect myself if I travel to an affected area?

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika virus disease. Travelers should consider visiting a travel clinic before a trip to address any other potential travel associated concerns, e.g. antimalarials, hepatitis A vaccination. When traveling to countries where Zika virus or other viruses spread by mosquitoes have been reported, protect yourself and others from this disease by taking steps to prevent mosquito bites;

- use [insect repellent](#) containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus and always in accordance with the label
- wear protective clothing including long sleeves and pants
- stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens
- use bed-nets if mosquitoes cannot be kept out of a residence
- eliminate standing water that collects in and around your residence

Precautions should be followed during the day and evenings as the mosquitoes that transmit these diseases are aggressive daytime and early evening biters. Please refer to the DOHMH pages on [repellents](#) and the [travel brochure](#). [\[Spanish\]](#) [\[Chinese\]](#)

How would New York City respond if Zika virus were found locally?

The mosquito thought to be responsible for transmitting Zika virus in Latin America is *Aedes aegypti*. This mosquito is not found in NYC. However, mosquito control methodologies used to prevent West Nile virus would be employed if Zika virus were found locally.

The Health Department is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to identify cases and keep communities informed.

How is Zika virus disease diagnosed?

Infection with the virus is diagnosed by a blood test.

How is Zika virus disease treated?

No specific treatment is available. People infected with the virus may receive medications to help relieve their symptoms. People who have the virus should stay

indoors or wear protective clothing and mosquito repellent for three to five days after they start to feel sick. This will help prevent mosquitoes from potentially spreading the virus to other New Yorkers.

Where can I get more information about Zika virus?

For more information visit the websites for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and for the [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#).