



Zika Virus – Frequently Asked Questions

What is Zika virus?

Zika virus is a virus similar to the one that causes West Nile, dengue, and yellow fever.

How does a person become infected with Zika virus?

Zika virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of a mosquito. However, the virus can be transmitted from a woman to her fetus, through sex (vaginal, anal, oral), or from a blood transfusion.

What is the risk of becoming infected with Zika virus in Illinois?

The risk of becoming infected with Zika virus in Illinois is low. The mosquito that primarily carries Zika virus (*Aedes aegypti*) is rarely found in Illinois. It has not been identified in Illinois in 2016. This type of mosquito typically cannot survive the cold winters in Illinois.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus?

80% of people infected with Zika virus do not have symptoms. For those who do have symptoms, they are typically mild and include fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes.

Who, in Illinois, is at risk for Zika virus?

People who travel to areas where Zika virus is circulating (Caribbean islands, Central America, South America, two areas of Miami in Florida, others) are at risk for Zika virus. Also, people who have sex with someone who has traveled to an area where Zika virus is circulating are at risk.

What are the health effects of Zika virus?

Zika virus infection in a woman during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects, such as microcephaly. A small portion of people with recent Zika virus infection have developed Guillain-Barré syndrome, which impacts the nervous system causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. The public health community is studying this topic intensely.

How can someone prevent Zika virus infection?

When traveling to areas where Zika virus is spreading, wear insect repellent and try to stay in air-conditioned places with screens. Abstain from sex with someone who has traveled to an area with Zika virus, or use a condom, for at least eight weeks (in some cases, longer). There is no vaccine at this time.

What is Illinois doing?

IDPH has developed the [Zika Virus Action Plan](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/zika/toolkit) (<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/zika/toolkit>), which describes IDPH's plans to address Zika virus. IDPH is working with its local public health partners for mosquito surveillance as well as human disease surveillance. IDPH is involved with the Zika Virus Pregnancy Registry and its lab is able to perform tests for Zika virus. IDPH has hosted multiple webinars for clinicians and community partners. The webinars, along with a wealth of other information, can be found on the newly revamped Zika virus page on the IDPH website <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/>.