



# Cherokee Nation Public Health

## Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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### Zika Virus Infection

#### **What is Zika virus infection?**

Zika virus infection (Zika) is caused by the Zika virus which is transmitted by certain types of mosquito.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Most infections don't cause symptoms (60-80%). When symptoms do occur they are usually mild and last 4 to 7 days.

The main symptoms are: Mild fever, rash (maculopapular), sore joints, muscle pain and headache, Conjunctivitis – inflamed (red) eyes, usually without a discharge.

Symptoms usually develop from 3 to 12 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Zika symptoms may difficult to distinguish from those of other mosquito-borne infections such as [dengue](#) and [chikungunya](#). During recent Zika outbreaks concerns have been raised about a link between Zika and some rare neurological conditions, including Guillain-Barré Syndrome. Some rare developmental malformations, including microcephaly, in babies born to mothers exposed to Zika virus in the first six months of their pregnancy. Further evidence is needed to confirm if there really is a causal link between infections with Zika virus and these conditions.

#### **How is it spread?**

People develop Zika virus infection after being bitten by a mosquito that is infected with the virus. The virus is not spread directly from person to person. Zika is spread by the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*. It is possible that other mosquitoes in the *Aedes* family may also be able to spread the virus. The mosquito becomes infected when it feeds on somebody who has Zika viruses in the blood during their infection. Once infected, the virus multiplies inside the mosquito and can infect other people when the mosquito feeds again. Transmission of Zika from mother to baby

can occur, most probably across the placenta or possibly during delivery. Sexual transmission has also been reported in a few cases.

### **Who is at risk?**

Travellers who go to places where mosquitoes spread Zika to people are at risk of infection if bitten. Before 2007, Zika virus was only found in parts of tropical Africa and Southeast Asia. In 2007, an outbreak was reported on Yap Island, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Between 2013 and 2015 there have been a number of outbreaks in the Pacific, including a large outbreak in French Polynesia. In 2015, Zika emerged in Chile and Brazil and has subsequently been reported in a number of countries in South and Central America.

### **How is it prevented?**

There is currently no vaccine or medicine to prevent Zika virus infection. The mosquitoes that transmit Zika prefer to live and bite people indoors, especially during daylight hours and into the early evening. These mosquitoes prefer to rest in dark areas inside and under houses and buildings. Travelers to Zika-affected areas can protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites: Stay in accommodation with screened windows and doors. Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors. Wear loose fitting clothing that covers the arms and legs. Apply insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin to exposed skin, all through the day and into the early evening. Topical repellents are not recommended for use on children below the age of 3 months. Follow the product directions. Use permethrin treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). Buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself. Do not use permethrin directly on skin. Travelers, especially pregnant women and families with young children, should consult their doctor or travel clinic for personalized mosquito prevention advice prior to travel.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor can take a blood sample and have it tested for antibodies against Zika virus. A second blood test may be required to confirm a recent infection.

### **How is it treated?**

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus. Your doctor will be able to advise you on treating the symptoms with medications such as Tylenol. Treatment with aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines is not recommended because of a potential increased risk of hemorrhagic syndrome (bleeding) reported with some related viruses, such as Dengue, and the risk of a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome after viral infection in children and teenagers.



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