Zika Virus and Pregnancy

Zika virus is spread to people mainly through the bite of an infected mosquito. It can also be spread through sex. Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause certain birth defects in babies. A lot is still unknown about the effects of Zika. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are working to discover more about this virus. The CDC has issued precautions to protect pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant from Zika.

Precautions for pregnant women and their partners

- **Delay travel to areas where there is Zika virus transmission.** At this time, Zika virus spread by mosquitoes has NOT been reported in Ohio.

- **Zika can be passed through sex** from a person who has Zika to his or her sex partners. If you have a sex partner who traveled to an area with Zika, do not have unprotected sex during pregnancy. Use condoms the right way every time you have sex.

- **Strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites.**

- **If you develop the symptoms of Zika,** see a healthcare provider right away for testing.

For a list of areas with Zika, go to: [www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html). If you plan on traveling to one of these areas, please talk with your health care provider before you travel.

Protect yourself from mosquito bites

- **Wear insect repellent.** Yes, it is safe when used according to label instructions. Insect repellent is the BEST way to prevent bites. These are safe to use during pregnancy:
  - Products containing DEET include Cutter, OFF! and Skintastic.
  - Products containing picaridin include Cutter Advanced and Skin so Soft Bug Guard Plus.
  - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) included in Repel.
  - Products containing IR3535 include Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Expedition and Skin Smart.

- Medicaid pays for insect repellent. Ask your health care provider for a prescription.

- **Cover up.** Wear long-sleeves and pants.

- **Keep mosquitoes outside.** Use screens on windows and doors. Use air conditioning when available. Get rid of standing water around your home. If you cannot keep mosquitoes out, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
Testing for the Zika virus

Pregnant women are not more likely to get Zika virus, and it is not expected to affect people who live in central Ohio who have not traveled outside of the area.

Testing is offered to a pregnant woman between 2 and 12 weeks after returning from travel to areas with Zika transmission.

Pregnant women that have been to an area with ongoing transmission of Zika virus AND have symptoms can be tested in the first week of the illness.

There is no known treatment or vaccine available for Zika virus at this time.

Symptoms of Zika

The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.

The most common symptoms of Zika are:
- Red eyes called conjunctivitis
- Joint pain
- Fever
- Rash

Many people do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected with the virus.

Before getting pregnant

If you or your partner are thinking about becoming pregnant, talk to your health care provider about your plans and your risk of getting Zika.

Follow steps to prevent mosquito bites if you are traveling to an area where Zika is spreading.

Wait to try to get pregnant if you may have been exposed to Zika.

For women:
- Wait at least 8 weeks after your symptoms started.
- Wait at least 8 weeks after exposure to Zika if you have had no symptoms.

For men:
- Wait at least 6 months after your symptoms started.
- Wait at least 8 weeks after travel if you have had no symptoms.

Please talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.
Visit www.columbus.gov/zika to learn more about Zika.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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