



Health Tips for Parents

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What do I need to know about the Zika virus?

Zika is a mosquito-transmitted virus that has spread through Latin America and the Caribbean. While there have been no locally-transmitted cases of Zika virus reported in the U.S., there have been confirmed cases of travel-associated transmission.

The Zika virus is primarily spread through mosquito bites, but there is also evidence that it can be transmitted through sexual contact and from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Consequently, Zika virus disease is of particular concern for pregnant women.

It is estimated that 80 percent of individuals infected with the Zika virus will not exhibit any symptoms.

For the one out of five people who do experience symptoms, they are usually very mild and typically last two-to-seven days before diminishing completely. "Symptoms are characterized by acute onset of rash, joint pain, headache or conjunctivitis (pink eye). Some may also have fever," says Nava Yeganeh MD, UCLA pediatrician, Division of Infectious Diseases.

There are no vaccines, medicines or commercially available diagnostic tests for Zika virus disease. Current treatments aim to ease symptoms through rest, hydration and the use of acetaminophen to alleviate fever and pain.

Two rare but serious medical conditions associated with Zika virus include Guillain-Barré syndrome, a disease of the nervous system, and microcephaly, a condition in which a fetus's brain develops abnormally, resulting in a small head.

"The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes, is to protect yourself and your family from being bitten," advises Dr. Yeganeh. Pregnant women who have recently traveled to Zika-affected areas are encouraged to meet with their healthcare providers, even if they do not feel ill.

Protect yourself against mosquito bites:

- Cover exposed skin (wear long-sleeve shirts, pants and socks)
- Stay in air-conditioned rooms or rooms with screens on the doors
- Use DEET or other EPA-registered insect repellants on exposed skin
- Use insecticide-treated nets when sleeping outdoors or in rooms without window screens
- Avoid areas of "still water," where mosquitos breed



Travel Tips

UCLA's International Adoption and Travel Clinic at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA provides a wide range of vaccines and general travel medicine consultations to ensure families stay healthy and infection-free during travel. The clinic also helps families prepare a travel kit with medications and dosing instructions so parents can treat a child with unexpected health needs while traveling.