

# Here's what we know about Zika virus:



by Monica Hamburg, MD



Reports about the Zika virus have been in the news for many months now and we all are concerned about yet another spreading tropical illness.

Zika is not a newly-discovered virus, it was actually first seen in 1947 in Uganda. But this year the infection seems to be spreading much more than usual. It can cause neurologic problems in developing fetuses. Last May, 2015 the first Zika case was confirmed in Brazil and in February, 2016 the World Health Organization declared Zika virus an international Public Health Emergency.

Zika is usually transmitted through the bite of the *Aedes* mosquito, but it can also be sexually transmitted. The virus lasts in a person's blood for about one week. After infection and recovery people are immune.

What happens if you are infected with the Zika virus? If you are not a pregnant woman there is not much to worry about. Symptoms are usually absent or very mild and could include fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (pinkeye). Rarely do people need to go to the hospital for this infection. In fact, many never know they were infected.

Zika virus in pregnant women can cause a serious birth defect called microcephaly. Microcephaly means the brain and skull do not grow normally. Other neurologic birth defects can also occur.

There is no treatment or vaccine for Zika but there are steps you can take to prevent infection. (Zika virus vaccine is being tested now!) Avoid getting bitten by mosquitos. Pregnant women and women who are considering becoming pregnant should avoid travel to high risk areas if they can (see map of affected countries).

It is also important to avoid mosquito bites here in the United States in order to prevent the spread of Zika to mosquitos who live here and to prevent other mosquito-borne illnesses. Travelers who return to the US from affected areas should especially avoid mosquito bites for 3 weeks for this reason.

If you have to travel to risk areas, wear long sleeved pants and shirts, sleep under mosquito netting, and use insect repellent with 20-30% DEET or 20% Picardin. At home, empty any standing water around your home which will attract breeding mosquitos. (see next page)

Pregnant women or those who might become pregnant should consult the CDC website prior to making travel plans, and consider avoiding travel to risk countries. Also, because Zika can be sexually transmitted, these women should abstain or partners should use condoms if they have traveled to affected areas. Pregnant women should see their doctor immediately for fever, rash, joint pain or pinkeye within 2 weeks of traveling to affected areas.

While there have been over 100 cases reported in the US, these have all been travelers to date and no Zika transmission has yet been reported in the US.



as of May 2016  
check for updates at  
[www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov)



# summertime Mosquitos and Ticks!

by Monica Hamburg, MD

## Mosquitos:

Mosquitos used to be a simple nuisance in our childhoods, but now can transmit a number of infections including *Zika*, *West Nile*, *Chikungunya*, and *Eastern Equine Encephalitis viruses*. In some countries *Malaria* is spread by mosquitos. So let's try not to be bitten!

**To prevent exposure:** Eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Avoid having standing water around your home, such as buckets or toys that may fill with rain water. Consider avoiding playing outside at dusk and dawn, times of high mosquito activity. Mosquito netting can be useful over strollers. Screen windows and doors. When practical, wear long sleeves, long pants, covered shoes and hats. Use insect repellent with up to 25% DEET or 20% Picardin on children older than 2 months. (Higher DEET concentrations last longer but are not any stronger. Picardin works for mosquitos but not ticks.)

**To treat mosquito bites:** Take zyrtec (cetirizine) by mouth for itch (non-drowsy), or benadryl by mouth if it is bedtime. Apply cortisone cream 1% and clean your child's hands and nails so they don't scratch and cause a skin infection.

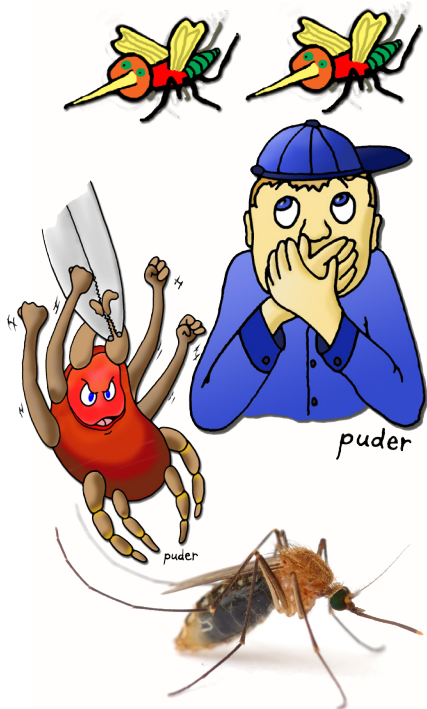
## Ticks:

Ticks are tiny blood-sucking insect which can transmit certain diseases to humans including *Lyme disease*, *Ehrlichiosis* and others.

**To prevent tick bites:** avoid wooded or bushy areas with high grass. If hiking, wear light-colored clothing with long pants, long sleeves and covered shoes, try to walk in the center of trails or sidewalks, and use insect repellent (we recommend up to DEET 25% for kids and adults now, but don't use under 2 months of age). Parents should apply repellent to children's exposed skin and clothes avoiding hands, eyes and mouth. Playgrounds should not directly abut wooded areas and the use of wood chips or gravel under playground equipment will decrease ticks in the area. Use a tick preventative on your dog and check pets daily for ticks so they don't become ill themselves or bring home an unwanted visitor that could end up on the humans in your home.

**To remove a tick:** Search your children for ticks every night. Don't forget under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, around the waist and in the hair. The longer the tick is attached the greater the chance of disease transmission, and ticks that are attached for 24 hours or less cannot transmit Lyme disease. To remove the tick, grasp the tick with tweezers close to the skin and gently pull the tick straight out without twisting. Wash the area with soap and water.

**What if your child is bitten by a tick?** read the full article on our website at [www.clarkstownpeds.com/downloads/](http://www.clarkstownpeds.com/downloads/)



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