

Epidemiology

Zika virus infection (ZIKV) is a vector-borne disease that is transmitted from the bite of an infected mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*). The most common symptoms of this Dengue-like virus include fever, headache, conjunctivitis, rash and muscle and joint pain. Symptoms are usually mild and last for a few days. The incubation period for Zika ranges from 3-12 days.



Zika virus has been linked to congenital birth defects and microcephaly in Brazil over the past year. Further research is being conducted in this area. Guillain-Barré syndrome also has been reported in patients following suspected Zika virus infection.

Where is transmission occurring?

The virus has been circulating through South and Central America, Mexico and most recently the Caribbean (Haiti, Barbados, Martinique, Puerto Rico). To date, three (3) cases of ZIKV infection have been confirmed in Canada. The cases are associated with travel to countries in Central and South America.



Recommendations

Travelers to the affected regions should protect themselves from mosquito bites with protective clothing and appropriate insect repellent. *Aedes* is a vector which bites most often during the daytime and in urban centers.

PHAC is recommending that pregnant women and those considering becoming pregnant discuss their travel plans with their health care provider to assess their risk and consider postponing travel to areas where the ZIKV is circulating in the Americas. If travel cannot be postponed then strict mosquito bite prevention measures should be followed to protect themselves against bites.

Physicians should consider ZIKV on their list of differentials if patients present with appropriate symptoms and have a history of travel to the affected areas. There is no specific antiviral treatment; however certain medications can provide symptom relief. Laboratory testing is done by off Island serological testing with a 1-2 week turnaround time. Please mark travel and request for Dengue, Chikungunya, or Zika virus. If a patient is pregnant and presents with a fever and rash, consultation with an infectious diseases or tropical medicine expert is suggested.

For additional information and updated travel notices regarding ZIKV please see:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/notices-avis/notices-avis-eng.php?id=143>
http://www.wpro.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs_05182015_zika/en/
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2016/the-pre-travel-consultation/protection-against-mosquitoes-ticks-other-arthropods>