Zika Virus Disease

What is Zika Virus Disease?
Zika is a virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week.

What are the symptoms?
Most people who become infected with Zika virus will not get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild, and for this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected. The most common symptoms of Zika virus are fever, rash, muscle and joint pain, headache, and/or conjunctivitis (red eyes). The incubation period is 3 to 14 days, with 50% of people developing symptoms 1 week after exposure.

How is it spread?
Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. Aedes Mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters, they also bite at night. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus; the infected mosquito then spreads the virus to other people through their bites. Zika can also be passed through sex from a person who has Zika to his or her sex partners and can be spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus.

Who is at risk of being infected?
Anyone living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is found, and who has not already been infected with the virus, is at risk to be infected with Zika from mosquito bites.
Anyone having unprotected sex with a partner who has Zika virus and the fetus of a pregnant woman with Zika virus are at risk of Zika virus infection.

How is Zika diagnosed?
Zika virus is diagnosed through blood and urine tests. If you have recently traveled and develop symptoms consistent with Zika virus, contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may order tests to look for Zika or other similar diseases.

How is Zika virus treated?
There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat the virus. Symptoms may be treated by getting plenty of rest, drinking fluids to prevent dehydration, and taking fever and pain reducing medicine such as acetaminophen. Check with your provider before taking aspirin or a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory.

What are the concerns of Zika Virus?
Zika infection during pregnancy can cause microcephaly in the fetus. Microcephaly is a serious birth defect where the infant’s head, and often brain, is smaller than expected. Other problems such as defects of the eye, hearing deficits, and seizures have been detected among fetuses and infants infected with Zika virus before birth. Guillain-Barré syndrome, an uncommon sickness of the nervous system has also been noted among patients infected by the Zika Virus.

Prevention and control
Reducing mosquito breeding sites and reducing contact between mosquitoes and people is top priority.

- Wear clothes that cover as much of the body as possible.
  - Long sleeves
  - Long pants
- Use insect repellent
  - Always follow directions
  - Reapply as directed
  - Do not apply to skin under clothing
  - Treat clothing with permethrin
  - Do NOT use permethrin products directly on skin
  - If using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first
  - When applying to young children, carefully read and follow instructions.
- Use physical barriers
  - Window and door screens
- Use air conditioning as much as possible
- Empty, clean, or tightly cover containers that hold water.

Men who reside in or have traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission who have a pregnant partner, or are concerned about sexual transmission, should abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

CDC recommends that women who are pregnant consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

For further information visit:

Report Zika cases to Saint Louis County Department of Public Health by calling 314-615-1630