

ZIKA VIRUS

I suspect that almost everyone has now heard about the Zika virus. This virus is transmitted by a specific mosquito, which is primarily actively biting during daylight hours. This mosquito is found throughout much of the Americas, including parts of the United States.

An estimated 80% of persons infected with the virus are asymptomatic. Symptomatic disease is generally mild and characterized by acute onset of fever, maculopapular rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis. Symptoms last from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Treatment is symptomatic, with rest, fluids and the use of analgesics and antipyretics.

Maternal-fetal transmission of Zika virus has been documented during pregnancy. This virus has been isolated from fetal losses, as well as infants with microcephaly. There are no studies yet which definitely prove a cause and effect. Because there is neither a vaccine, nor prophylactic medications, available to prevent Zika virus infection, the CDC recommends that all pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas where Zika virus transmission is present. If one must travel to an endemic area, long-sleeved shirts and long pants are recommended as well as EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picardin, or IR3535- all of which are safe for pregnant when used as directed. Trade names include: OFF, CUTTER, SAWYER, ULTRATHON, SKIN SMART, SKIN SO SOFT BUG GUARD PLUS.

For updated information on areas affected by the Zika virus: www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html