

PREVENTING THE SEXUAL TRANSMISSION OF ZIKA VIRUS

Understanding what we do and do not know

At this time, our understanding of sexual transmission of Zika virus is limited to data from a small number of cases. CDC and its partners are working hard to learn more about the viral persistence and infectivity of Zika virus in body fluids and how we can best prevent the spread of Zika virus through sex.

What we know

- Zika virus can be spread through sex by a man infected with the virus to his partners.
- Zika virus can be present in semen longer than in blood.
- In known cases of sexual transmission, the men developed Zika symptoms.
- From these cases, we know the virus can be spread from the man before symptoms start, while he has symptoms, and after symptoms resolve.
- Tests to detect Zika virus in semen are not widely available and not recommended because we have limited understanding of how to interpret the results of such tests.

What we do not know

- We do not know how long the virus can stay in the semen of men who have had Zika virus.
- We do not know if infected men who never develop Zika symptoms can have Zika virus in their semen and spread it through sex.
- We do not know if infected women can spread Zika virus to their sex partners.
- We do not know if Zika virus can be spread from other body fluids exchanged during sex, such as saliva and vaginal fluid.

What CDC recommends to prevent the sexual transmission of Zika virus

The following guidance is specific to the prevention of sexual transmission of Zika virus for couples in which a man has traveled to or lives in an area with Zika. Guidance for people wanting to get pregnant can be found here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6512e3er.htm>

Couples in which a woman is pregnant

- Couples in which the woman is pregnant and the man has traveled to or lives in an area with Zika should use condoms, or not have sex during the pregnancy.

Other couples concerned about sexual transmission*

- Couples in which a man has or had confirmed Zika virus infection or illness consistent with Zika virus infection should consider using condoms or not having sex for at least 6 months after onset of sickness. This includes men who live in, and men who traveled to, areas with Zika.
- Couples in which a man traveled to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission but did not have symptoms of Zika virus infection should consider using condoms or not having sex for at least 8 weeks after leaving the area.
- Couples in which a man lives in an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission but has not had symptoms of Zika virus infection might consider using condoms or not having sex while ongoing transmission persists.

Note: To be effective, condoms must be used correctly from start to finish, every time during sex. Sex includes vaginal, anal, and oral (mouth to penis) sex.

*Note: Couples who do not want to get pregnant should use the most effective contraceptive methods that they can use correctly and consistently to prevent an unplanned pregnancy in addition to using condoms to prevent Zika.

Actions for state and local public health

Communicate about the prevention of sexual transmission in your state or jurisdiction

- **Talking about the sexual transmission of Zika virus can be complicated.** Take into consideration the following issues when talking about how to prevent the sexual transmission of Zika virus:
 - Anyone who is concerned about getting Zika virus from sex can use condoms or choose not to have sex.
 - To be effective, condoms must be used correctly from start to finish, every time during sex.
 - Sex includes vaginal, anal and oral (mouth to penis) sex.
 - There may be barriers to accessing and using condoms including availability, price, and a person's ability to convince their partner to use condoms.
 - Religious beliefs may restrict a person's ability to use condoms or other contraception.
 - Recommendations on the sexual transmission of Zika virus will be different for those areas with Zika versus those without.
- **Help pregnant women protect their pregnancies.** Pregnant women who have male sex partners who travel to or live in areas with Zika should use condoms for or abstain from sex for the duration of their pregnancy. To be effective, condoms should be used the right way, every time the couple has sex. Sex includes vaginal, anal, and oral (mouth to penis) sex.

Stay Informed: Knowledge is evolving as we learn more

- Ensure healthcare providers in your jurisdiction are aware of CDC resources and updated clinical guidance on the sexual transmission of Zika virus.
- CDC has published updated clinical guidance based on the latest available research. http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6512e3er.htm?s_cid=mm6512e3er_w
- CDC has up-to-date information and resources available on the Zika virus website: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika>
- Call or email CDC for direct access to experts to help answer your Zika virus questions.
 - CDC-INFO is available to answer the public's questions via 1-800-CDC-INFO
 - CDC also maintains a 24/7 Pregnancy Hotline for healthcare providers of patients with possible Zika virus infection. Access this service by calling 770-488-7100, or email ZikaMCH@cdc.gov.
- Find resources and CDC Guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/public-health-partners/index.html>

Resources

- CDC's Zika Virus and Sexual Transmission Webpage – <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/sexual-transmission.html>
- Condom effectiveness – <http://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/index.html>
- How to use a male condom the right way every time – <http://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/male-condom-use.html>