

ZIKA: PROTECTING HEALTHCARE AND LABORATORY WORKERS



About Zika

- Zika virus primarily spreads through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito (*Ae. aegypti* and *Ae. albopictus*).
- Zika can be passed through sex from a person who has Zika to his or her partners.
- A pregnant woman can pass Zika to her fetus, which can result in serious birth defects.
- Many people infected with Zika won't have symptoms or will only have mild symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes. Other symptoms include muscle pain and headache. Symptoms can last for several days to a week.



Workers at Risk

- Workers who are exposed to mosquitoes, or the blood or other body fluids of an infected person, are at risk for Zika.

Control and Prevention

General Recommendations

- Follow good [infection control](#) and biosafety practices. Always follow universal precautions for potential bloodborne pathogens (BBP) exposures, as described in OSHA's BBP standard ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)).
- Use standard precautions to expand the universal precautions as needed to provide proper protection, including expanded personal protective equipment (PPE) — gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection.
- Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60 percent alcohol. Soap and water is best for visibly soiled hands. Wash before and after contact with a patient or potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removing PPE, including gloves.

Laboratory Recommendations

- Laboratories should ensure that facilities and practices meet the appropriate Biosafety Level (BSL) for the type of work being conducted. CDC has specific [Biosafety Guidance for the Transportation of Specimens and for Work with Zika virus in the Laboratory](#).
- Laboratories should handle Zika virus at BSL-2, including limiting access to laboratories and other work areas when work is occurring and when conducting certain procedures in biosafety cabinets or other containment equipment. Some procedures may require BSL-3 precautions, including additional respiratory protection, based on the risk assessment of the proposed work ([Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories \(BMBL\) 5th Edition](#)).



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Employer Recommendations

- Train supervisors and workers on recognizing the symptoms of Zika.
- Consider enhanced precautions in situations where workers are at increased risk of exposure to Zika virus or other hazards.
- Ensure that workers receive prompt and appropriate medical evaluation and follow-up after a suspected exposure to Zika virus. If the exposure falls under OSHA's BBP standard, employers must comply with medical evaluation and follow-up requirements in the standard ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)).
- Consider options for granting leave during the first week of illness.

Workers Recommendations

- Follow workplace standard operating procedures and use engineering controls and work practices to prevent exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Do not bend, recap, or remove contaminated needles or other contaminated sharps. Properly dispose of these items in closable, puncture-resistant, leak-proof, and labeled or color-coded containers.
- Use sharps with engineered sharps injury protection (SESIP) to avoid sharps-related injuries.
- Report all needlesticks, lacerations, and other exposure incidents to supervisors as soon as possible.
- If symptoms develop, seek medical attention promptly.



Workers with Suspected or Confirmed Zika

- There is no specific medicine to treat Zika.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Take medicine, such as acetaminophen, to reduce fever and pain.
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.
- To help prevent others from getting sick, strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the first week of illness.
- To prevent transmission to partners via sexual contact, abstain from vaginal, anal, and oral sexual activity or use condoms. See [Zika and Sexual Transmission](#) for more information.

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/zika

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/mosquito-borne/zika.html

Occupational Safety and Health Administration, www.osha.gov/zika/