



**Westchester County  
Department of Health**

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**KEEP  
HEALTHY  
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GET THE FACTS**



## Zika Virus 101

### What is Zika virus?

Zika is a virus that is primarily transmitted to people through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito.

### How is Zika virus transmitted?

The most common way that [Zika virus is transmitted](#) is through mosquito bites. Zika virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. The virus can also be spread through sexual contact and blood. Zika is not spread from person to person by casual contact such as sharing food with someone else.

### Who is at risk for infection with Zika virus?

Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found is at risk for infection. However, pregnant women and women who are trying to become pregnant are of special concern because Zika can cause birth defects. Visit our website for more information about [Zika and pregnancy](#).

### Where is Zika virus spreading?

Zika is present in Central and South America, Mexico, the Caribbean and other places listed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has issued a [travel alert](#) for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

Currently, the Zika virus is not spreading in Westchester County and the type of mosquito linked to the outbreak, the Aedes aegypti, has not been found here. A different mosquito that may carry Zika, the Aedes albopictus, is sometimes found in Westchester and the surrounding area during the summer months. Health experts are still learning whether the Aedes albopictus is likely to spread Zika to people.

### What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

About one in five people infected with Zika will get sick. The illness is usually mild and many people might not realize they have been infected. Symptoms usually begin two to 12 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Rarely, it can cause an ascending paralysis called Guillain-Barré syndrome. See your healthcare provider if you develop these symptoms and have visited an area where Zika is found.

### What should I do if I have Zika?

Treat the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
- Take medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) to reduce fever and pain
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness by using insect repellent and covering exposed skin when outdoors. During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in a person's blood. The virus can be passed from an infected person to a mosquito through mosquito bites. An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people.

## How can I protect myself and my family from Zika?

Follow the tips below for how to take personal protective measures against mosquitoes and ways to eliminate standing water around your home where mosquitoes can breed. You can also download our [Keep Healthy and Bug Off brochure](#) that is filled with mosquito bite prevention tips.

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- [Use EPA-registered insect repellents](#) containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535. Always use as directed.
- Apply sunscreen first, then repellent
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use all EPA-registered insect repellents, including DEET, according to the product label.
- Most repellents, including DEET, can be used on children aged >2 months.
- Use [permethrin-treated clothing](#) and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself.
- Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.
- Use a mosquito bed-net if you cannot keep mosquitoes out of your residence. Cover cribs, strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting too.
- Remove [common backyard mosquito sources](#) such as old tires, buckets, wheelbarrows, toys and other items from your property that can collect water.
- Cover outdoor trash containers to keep rainwater from accumulating inside.
- Keep your gutters clear.
- Keep your property clear of objects or debris that can hold even tiny amounts of water.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of recycling containers that are left outdoors.
- Drain water in birdbaths, plant pots and drip trays twice a week.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs. Keep them empty and covered if not in use; drain water that collects on their covers.

### For more information:



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