



Chikungunya / Dengue / Zika

What are Chikungunya, Dengue, and Zika and how are they transmitted?

Chikungunya, Dengue, and Zika are all types of viruses transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. The Aedes species of mosquitoes that spread these viruses primarily bite during daytime hours. Zika virus can also occur through sexual contact.

Where is the risk?

The highest risk is for travellers visiting urban and residential areas in tropical countries of Central and South America, Asia, Caribbean, Africa, and Oceania. Most outbreaks occur during the tropical rainy season.

What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with dengue and zika do not have any symptoms (75-80% are asymptomatic) and about 3-28% of people infected with chikungunya do not have symptoms. Symptoms of all diseases are usually mild and flu-like including fever, headache, joint pain, rash, red eyes and muscle aches. Most people with mild symptoms recover within 1-2 weeks.

Chikungunya can cause recurrent joint pain in about 20% of people. Dengue can cause more serious signs of bleeding such as red spots or bruises on the skin, bleeding from the nose, mouth, or gums, vomiting blood and signs of shock. This is called dengue hemorrhagic fever and is more common if a person gets infected with dengue a second time and will usually require hospitalization. A small number of people infected with Zika virus will have neurological complications (approximately 1 in 5,000 cases).

Zika and pregnancy

Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause brain defects to the fetus such as microcephaly (an abnormally small brain and head). Pregnant women should avoid travelling to areas where zika is present. Women contemplating pregnancy should wait 8 weeks after travelling to an area with zika before trying to conceive. Men who have travelled to an area with zika should use condoms for 6 months before trying to conceive as the virus can remain in the semen. Men who have a pregnant partner should use condoms for the duration of pregnancy.

How can I prevent Chikungunya, Dengue, and Zika?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent these diseases so mosquito precautions are extremely important to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved, light coloured clothing and use an insect repellent containing 30% DEET or 20% Icaridin.