

# Surveillance, Disease Prevention & Control Division

Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)



## Zika Update February 29, 2016



### Background:

- Zika is a viral disease spread through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito. The same mosquito that transmits dengue and chikungunya.
- One in four people infected with Zika develops symptoms, and in those with symptoms the illness is usually mild.
- The disease causes fever, skin rash and conjunctivitis however symptoms such as muscle and joint pain, headache and malaise can occur. Symptoms usually last 2–7 days.
- Zika shares similar signs with dengue and chikungunya, and can be misdiagnosed in areas where both diseases are common.
- There is no specific treatment or vaccine for the disease.
- Zika is known to occur in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

### Current status in the CARPHA Member States and Surrounding Territories:

As at February 24, 2016, locally-confirmed cases of Zika have been confirmed in 15 countries: Aruba, Barbados, Bonaire, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

CARPHA advises Member States to:

- Bear in mind that dengue and chikungunya virus are still circulating in the region.
- Maintain routine surveillance for undifferentiated fever.
- Intensify Integrated Vector Management Strategies for control of Vector-Borne Diseases.
- Continue Health Education campaigns, reminding the public of the importance of the avoidance of mosquito bites and the elimination of breeding sites.

**CARPHA Member States and Surrounding Territories with Local Transmission of Zika Virus 2015-2016\***



\*Data as at 29 February, 2016

CARPHA Member States: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Is. Cayman Is., Curacao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Turks and Caicos Is.,

### Increase in neurological syndromes:

#### Guillain-Barré Syndrome

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is an acute disorder of the peripheral nerves, often preceded by a respiratory infection, causing weakness and often paralysis of the limbs. An association of GBS with Zika has been reported by several countries where transmission of the disease is ongoing. GBS treatment is symptomatic and supportive but recovery can take several weeks or months and may often cause prolonged disability.

#### Increase in microcephaly and other congenital anomalies

Microcephaly is the abnormal smallness of a newborn's head associated with incomplete brain development. The Brazilian Ministry of Health has reported an unusual increase in the number of children born with microcephaly and suggests a possible relationship between this increase and the ongoing Zika outbreak. There is no specific treatment for microcephaly.

Investigations into the possible association of both these diseases and Zika are ongoing. Public health authorities are advised to implement or intensify surveillance of neurological syndromes and congenital anomalies and ensure that health services are prepared for caring for patients with neurological conditions.

### Personal preventive measures:

The best way to prevent Zika is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. CARPHA advises that you take proper precautions to prevent being bitten:

- Use insect repellants containing DEET (>10%), picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 on exposed skin.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use air conditioning or have windows/doors securely closed or screened when indoors.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.

Please see overleaf for specific advice for pregnant women.

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#### Advice for pregnant women:

##### How does Zika virus affect pregnant women and fetuses?

Pregnant women, like everyone else share the same risk of being infected with Zika virus. Many women may become infected and remain unaware since they may not develop any symptoms. Research is ongoing to determine what effects Zika can have on fetuses. In November 2015, the Ministry of Health of Brazil established a relationship between an increase in cases of microcephaly in newborns and Zika virus infections. Preliminary findings from research being carried out by Brazilian authorities, indicate that the greatest risk of microcephaly and malformations appear to be associated with infection during the first trimester of pregnancy.

##### What does CARPHA recommend for pregnant women living in areas where Zika virus is circulating?

Everyone, including pregnant women and women of childbearing age, should avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by practicing the personal preventive measures stated in the aforementioned. It is vital that individuals identify and eliminate potential breeding sites in and around their homes to prevent the continued spread of the mosquito that transmits this disease as well as dengue and chikungunya.

##### Should pregnant women travel to areas where Zika is circulating?

Pregnant women should consult their healthcare provider before traveling and upon return and should follow the same recommendations for travellers:

1. Stay informed about the ZIKV situation in countries they are travelling to.
2. Prevent mosquito bites:
  - Use insect repellents on exposed skin. Insect repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or IR3535 are the most effective and safe when used according to the label. If also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
  - Where possible, wear light coloured long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes to minimize exposed skin.
  - When indoors use air conditioning and keep the doors and windows closed, unless they are screened, to keep out mosquitoes. If this is not possible, sleep under mosquito nets to prevent bites.

##### What does CARPHA recommend to women of childbearing age on becoming pregnant in areas where Zika virus is circulating?

CARPHA recommends that women of childbearing age take preventive measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, which in addition to Zika can also transmit diseases such as dengue and chikungunya.

Women who believe they have been exposed to Zika virus should consult with their healthcare provider for close monitoring of their pregnancy.

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