



Zika Virus

Recent outbreak in countries of South and Central America, specifically north eastern Brazil

Introduction

Zika is a disease caused by the Zika virus, spread primarily through the bite of a Zika infected *Aedes* species mosquito.

Known about since the late 1940's, and having previously been identified in Africa, Asia and the Western Pacific, Zika virus has recently become the focus of outbreaks in many countries of South and Central America, specifically north eastern Brazil. The extent of the outbreak has caused significant concern and global media interest because of a potential link between infection of pregnant women and birth defects in their unborn children.

Affected Areas

As of 2 February, as reported by CDC, affected areas, with reported active transmission of the virus in countries of South and Central America and the Caribbean, Cape Verde islands and Samoa (See map fig1. Taken from Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website)

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>

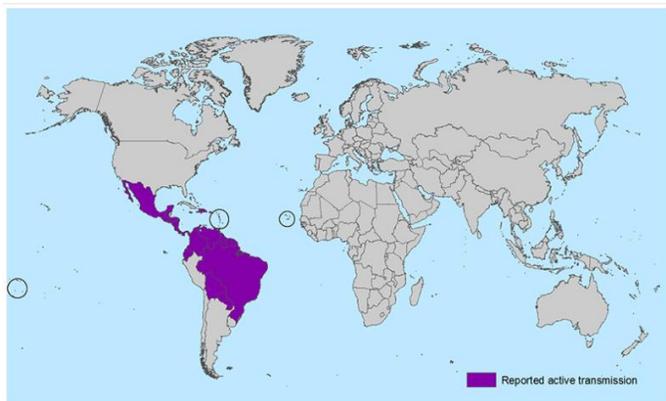


Fig1:

Risks and Precautions

The incubation period for Zika virus is believed to be a few days, with symptoms similar to other arbovirus infections such as dengue, and include mild fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise,

and headaches. Symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days.

There is no known vaccine for the virus and treatment is limited to alleviating the symptoms with general medication for fevers and the other symptoms.

Any illness should be reported to an appropriate medical officer.

Transmission is by the bite of the *Aedes species* mosquito – the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. There have also been reports of transmission between sexual partners and also via blood transfusions.

It is the possible effect of Zika virus on unborn children that is of most concern and it is for this reason that women who are pregnant, or considering getting pregnant, should avoid travelling to affected areas. Members should be aware of the potential implications of the Zika virus for all persons, in particular for female seafarers and for women accompanying their partners at sea.

All persons, women in particular, should consider carefully the requirements to travel to areas affected by Zika virus and, where there are any concerns, a doctor should be consulted.

With the potential for the virus to be transmitted through sexual activity, seafarers who may have been exposed to Zika should consider not engaging in sexual activity, or, as a minimum, should utilise appropriate protection.

Whilst the *Aedes* mosquito is mainly active during daylight the best protection against Zika virus is the use of preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites.



Risk Alert



Preventative measures include:

Use effective insect repellent (those containing DEET) - re-apply as needed and frequently.

Full body clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and trousers, in light colours.

Utilise physical barriers:

- Mosquito nets
- Closing windows and doors
- Screens on windows and doors
- Use of insecticide spray programme.

Before arrival in infected ports, throughout port stay and after departure, remove potential mosquito breeding sites, consider draining swimming pools and clearing ALL areas of standing water, no matter how small, such as buckets and pools of water on deck structures. Where standing water is unavoidable it should be tightly covered to prevent mosquito access and laying of eggs.

The guidance regarding Zika Virus is developing rapidly and is being updated on a regular basis. For the most up to date information, the following web sites should be amongst those being consulted:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

<http://www.who.int/features/qa/zika/en/>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2016/1st-emergency-committee-zika/en/>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2016/emergency-committee-zika-microcephaly/en/>

[http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.3623%20-%20Zika%20Virus%20Disease%20\(Secretariat\).pdf#search=zika](http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.3623%20-%20Zika%20Virus%20Disease%20(Secretariat).pdf#search=zika)

<http://www.safety4sea.com/outbreak-of-zika-virus-in-south-america/>

For further information on this or other Loss Prevention topics please contact the Loss Prevention Department, Steamship Insurance Management Services Ltd.

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