Zika Virus – Occupational Health and Safety Information for Researchers

2016

Revised 08/2016
Zika Virus

- Flavivirus related to dengue.
  - Previously found in Africa, southern Asia and the Pacific Islands.
  - Current outbreak (late 2015-present) is in South America, Papua New Guinea, and Florida.

Zika Virus

- Transmitted by mosquitoes that are active during the day.
- Only supportive treatment is available.
Symptoms

- Symptoms are usually mild, and only seen in 18% of cases
- Similar to influenza
  - Low-grade fever
  - Joint pain
  - Swollen joints
  - Headache
  - Rash
  - Fatigue, weakness
Potential High Risk Complication

• In adults, unconfirmed reports of increased incidence of Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) in previous outbreaks
  – Development of GBS may require co-infection with Zika and Dengue viruses
  – Paralysis
  – Loss of muscle function
Potential Reproductive Hazard

- Infection with Zika virus poses developmental hazard to fetuses exposed in utero
  - Data indicates Zika can cause microcephaly, other fetal brain abnormalities

- Risk of Sexual transmission
  - Zika virus persists in semen and other body fluids (e.g. urine, feces, saliva)
    - Confirmed male to female and female to male transmission

Recommendations

- Personnel handling cultures or animals infected with Zika virus should be aware of the potential reproductive hazard for:
  - Women of childbearing age or who are or plan to become pregnant and/or whose partners plan to become pregnant
  - Potential transmission of infection from sexual activity

Recommendations

- Laboratories where Zika virus is in use should be posted with signage indicating use of a reproductive hazard.
- Personnel with questions or concerns are encouraged to contact Employee Health Services and/or their personal physician.
- Any potential exposure must be reported immediately to Employee Health Services.
Additional Resources

CAUTION

Zika virus in use

Potential reproductive hazard

Questions: Contact Principal Investigator
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