
Zika Virus Disease

Public Education

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Abstract

Zika Virus Disease is a mosquito-borne illness that has garnered significant global attention due to its association with severe birth defects and neurological complications. This article provides detailed information about Zika Virus Disease, serving as a valuable resource for the public. It covers the causes, strains, risk factors, prevalence, signs and symptoms, transmission, diagnosis, pathophysiology, treatment, and preventive measures associated with the disease. Written in simple terms, this article aims to ensure that readers can understand and manage the risks associated with Zika Virus Disease effectively.

Introduction to Zika virus disease

Zika Virus Disease is an infectious disease caused by the Zika virus, which is primarily transmitted through the bite of

infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. These mosquitoes are also responsible for spreading other diseases such as dengue, chikungunya, and yellow fever. The virus was first identified in 1947 in rhesus monkeys in the Zika Forest of Uganda. It was later detected in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Zika Virus Disease typically causes mild symptoms, including fever, rash, conjunctivitis, and joint pain, which last for a few days to a week. However, the disease gained international concern when outbreaks in Brazil in 2015 revealed a link between Zika virus infection during pregnancy and severe birth defects, including microcephaly, a condition where a baby is born with a smaller-than-normal head. Additionally, Zika virus infection has been associated with neurological complications such as Guillain-Barré syndrome, a condition that can cause muscle weakness and paralysis (1-3).

Causes of Zika virus disease infection

Zika Virus Disease is primarily caused by the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito, specifically *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. These mosquitoes are most active during the day, with peak biting times early in the morning and late in the afternoon. The virus can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, through sexual contact, blood transfusion, and organ transplantation. In pregnant women, the virus can cross the placenta and infect the fetus, leading to congenital Zika syndrome, which includes microcephaly and other severe brain abnormalities. Understanding the causes of Zika Virus Disease is crucial for implementing effective preventive measures and reducing the risk of infection.

The strains of Zika virus disease

There are two main lineages of the Zika virus: the African lineage and the Asian lineage. The African lineage is

considered to be more virulent, but the Asian lineage is more widely spread and was responsible for the outbreaks in the Pacific Islands and the Americas. These two lineages have genetic differences that may influence their transmission dynamics and clinical outcomes.

Risk factors for Zika virus disease

Several factors increase the risk of Zika Virus Disease. Living in or traveling to areas where *Aedes* mosquitoes are common increases the likelihood of exposure to the virus. These areas include tropical and subtropical regions, particularly parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. Pregnant women are at higher risk because the virus can cause severe birth defects if contracted during pregnancy. Engaging in unprotected sex with someone who has traveled to or lives in an area with active Zika virus transmission also poses a risk. Additionally, individuals receiving blood transfusions or organ transplants in affected areas are at increased risk. Understanding these risk factors is vital for taking preventive measures and protecting vulnerable populations.

How common is Zika virus disease?

Zika Virus Disease has caused several significant outbreaks in recent years, particularly in the Americas, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The most notable outbreak occurred in Brazil in 2015, which led to a large number of cases of microcephaly and other congenital abnormalities in newborns. Since then, the virus has spread to over 84 countries, territories, and regions. Although the incidence of Zika Virus Disease has decreased since the peak of the outbreaks, it remains a significant public health concern in areas where *Aedes* mosquitoes are prevalent. Continuous surveillance and research are necessary to

monitor the spread of the virus and implement effective control measures.

Signs and symptoms of Zika virus disease

The signs and symptoms of Zika Virus Disease are generally mild and can last for several days to a week. Common symptoms include fever, rash, conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle and joint pain, headache, and fatigue. These symptoms typically appear two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Most people with Zika virus infection do not require hospitalization, and severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. However, Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects, including microcephaly and other severe brain abnormalities. Additionally, there is an association between Zika virus infection and neurological complications such as Guillain-Barré syndrome, which can lead to muscle weakness and paralysis.

Spread of Zika virus disease

Zika Virus Disease spreads primarily through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, which are found in tropical and subtropical regions around the world. These mosquitoes are most active during the day, with peak biting times early in the morning and late in the afternoon. The virus can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, through sexual contact, blood transfusion, and organ transplantation.

Human-to-mosquito-to-human transmission is the primary way the virus spreads in a community. In areas with active transmission, mosquitoes can become infected by biting an infected person and then spread the virus to others. Preventing the spread of Zika Virus Disease requires comprehensive mosquito control

measures, public health education, and preventive practices.

Diagnosis of Zika virus disease

Diagnosing Zika Virus Disease can be challenging due to the similarity of its symptoms to those of other viral infections such as dengue and chikungunya, which are also transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes. Laboratory tests are necessary to confirm the diagnosis. These tests include real-time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) to detect Zika virus RNA in blood, urine, or other body fluids, and serological tests to detect Zika virus-specific IgM and neutralizing antibodies. It is important to consult a healthcare provider if Zika virus infection is suspected, especially for pregnant women or individuals with severe symptoms. Early diagnosis is essential for managing the disease and preventing complications.

Pathophysiology of Zika virus disease

The pathophysiology of Zika Virus Disease involves the virus entering the body through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito. Once inside the body, the virus targets and replicates in various cell types, including skin cells, immune cells, and neural progenitor cells. The virus can cross the placental barrier during pregnancy, infecting the developing fetus and causing congenital abnormalities. The immune response to Zika virus infection involves the activation of both the innate and adaptive immune systems, leading to the production of antiviral cytokines and antibodies. However, the immune response can also contribute to tissue damage and inflammation.

Treatment of Zika virus disease

There is no specific antiviral treatment for Zika Virus Disease. Treatment is primarily supportive and focuses on

managing symptoms. Patients are advised to rest, drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, and take acetaminophen (paracetamol) to reduce fever and pain. Aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) should be avoided until dengue can be ruled out to reduce the risk of bleeding. Pregnant women with Zika virus infection should receive close monitoring and appropriate prenatal care to detect any complications early.

Preventive measures of Zika virus disease

Preventing Zika Virus Disease requires a multifaceted approach that includes mosquito control, personal protection, and public health education. Reducing mosquito breeding sites by eliminating standing water in and around homes is essential. Using insect repellent, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and using mosquito nets can help prevent mosquito bites. Pregnant women should avoid traveling to areas with active Zika virus transmission and take extra precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Safe sex practices, including the use of condoms, can reduce the risk of sexual transmission. Blood donors should be screened for Zika virus infection to prevent transmission through blood transfusions. Public health education campaigns can raise awareness about the risks and preventive measures associated with Zika Virus Disease. Ongoing surveillance and research are vital for early detection and control of outbreaks.

Conclusion

Zika Virus Disease is a significant public health concern due to its association with severe birth defects and neurological complications. Understanding the causes, risk factors, symptoms, and methods of transmission is essential for

preventing and controlling outbreaks. While there is no specific antiviral treatment available, supportive care and preventive measures can help manage the disease and reduce the risk of transmission. Public health education and ongoing research are critical for developing effective prevention and treatment strategies. Early detection, appropriate treatment, and preventive measures are key to managing the risks associated with Zika Virus Disease.

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