



Texas Parent to Parent

Information about the Zika Virus

Elizabeth Hong, TxP2P Staff

Headlines about Zika are everywhere! With [microcephaly](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/s0413-zika-microcephaly.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/s0413-zika-microcephaly.html>) and related health conditions, it is no wonder why. Despite this, though, many of us are left wondering what that means for our families and us. In November 2016, the Texas Department of State Health Services announced local transmission of Zika virus had occurred in Texas. Several other cases of transmission were reported and so the CDC determined that [Brownsville](https://www.cdc.gov/zika/intheus/texas-update.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/intheus/texas-update.html>) is now a cautionary area (yellow area) as there may be a risk of infection. At this time, prevention is the only way to combat Zika.

Due to the nature of the [Zika virus](https://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/) (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/>), anyone who does not live in an area with active Zika transmission is unlikely to get the Zika Virus unless they travel to an area with active transmission or engage in unprotected sex with someone who has been in an area with active transmission.

Zika is primarily spread through the bite of the Aedes Aegypti mosquito. This particular mosquito breeds in very small amounts of water. There is enough water in a bottle cap or leaf for it to breed. Also, this mosquito stays close to home and will bite where he breeds. These mosquitoes can also carry Dengue, Chikungunya, and West Nile so there is ample reason to prevent them. However, because of the seriousness of [mother to fetus transmission](http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/871391) (<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/871391>) of Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome (CZVS) including microcephaly, central nervous system abnormalities, vision and/or hearing issues, and more, it is imperative to do our best to prevent widespread infection of Zika virus in our communities.

The same [tips](http://www.texaszika.org/docs/ZikaPushCardGeneralEnglish.pdf) (<http://www.texaszika.org/docs/ZikaPushCardGeneralEnglish.pdf>) that we hear from [preventing mosquitoes](http://www.texaszika.org/prevention.htm) (<http://www.texaszika.org/prevention.htm>), removing standing water, clearing rain gutters, and checking your property for sources of water, can help prevent the spread of Zika. Also wearing long sleeves and pants, using an EPA approved mosquito repellent, and using air conditioning, screens, or mosquito nets can help prevent the bites themselves. While Zika may not be in your community, preventing mosquitoes helps to prevent Zika from spreading in our neighborhoods and cities. While it may not seem as important to prevent bites if you have no intention to become pregnant, it is an important step in prevention for others in our community.

The [CDC recommends](https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/reproductive-age/desire-pregnancy.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/reproductive-age/desire-pregnancy.html>) that women wait at least 8 weeks after exposure to try to get pregnant, that men wait 6 months, and that partners use a barrier method of birth control to prevent transmission. Medicaid has announced that women and girls between the ages of 10 and 45 may be eligible to receive free EPA-approved mosquito repellent. More information can be

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website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org

found [here](https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news-releases/2016/11/texas-medicaid-brings-back-mosquito-repellent-benefit) (<https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news-releases/2016/11/texas-medicaid-brings-back-mosquito-repellent-benefit>).

Anyone who has been exposed to Zika and has symptoms can be tested for the virus by the local health department and CDC. Also, pregnant women who have been exposed either through sexual transmission or exposure in an area with mosquito transmission occurring should be tested regardless of whether or not they have symptoms. You should see your doctor to coordinate testing. However, at this time, the CDC has a backlog of Zika tests and will only process the tests for those who have been exposed AND are experiencing symptoms, or pregnant women who had been exposed with or without symptoms. Those who are interested in becoming pregnant and are concerned about the Zika virus can be tested through private labs like QuestDiagnostics, LabCorps, or Viracor. These tests can cost anywhere from \$165-\$700. You can read more about Zika testing [here](https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/types-of-tests.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/types-of-tests.html>).

Due to the nature of the mosquitoes who carry Zika virus, it is possible for this virus to spread through large parts of the country. While most of us do not live in areas where there is current widespread transmission, we can all do our part to help prevent further spread. To find out more about Zika, you can click on any of the underlined links in this article. You can also log on to www.Texaszika.org where you can read more about transmission and prevention.

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