Zika Update for OHSU Students

What is Zika?
The Zika virus is transmitted through the infected bite of an Aedes species mosquito. It can also be spread during sex via the semen of a man infected with Zika virus and also passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus.

What are the symptoms of Zika?
Many people with Zika have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. The most common symptoms include fever rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Sometimes people experience muscle pain and headache. Symptoms typically last a few days to a week. Symptomatic people tend to get better quickly and very rarely die from Zika infection. There have been cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome associated with the Zika infection. People previously infected by Zika typically have lifelong immunity and are protected from future Zika infections.

How can you prevent infection?
There is no vaccine to prevent the Zika virus disease. There is no medication to cure Zika once infected. It is most important to protect yourself against mosquito bites when traveling to countries where Zika is present. Prevent sexual transmission by strictly adhering to proper condom use or by not having sex for at least 6 months after return from travel. Please see the CDC website for details regarding where Zika virus is present as this is likely to change and to read more information about steps to appropriately prevent mosquito bites.

What is known about Zika in pregnancy?
The Zika virus can pass from a pregnant mother to her fetus. The World Health Organization sent out a statement on April 7, 2016 stating there is scientific consensus that the Zika virus is a potential cause of microcephaly. Microcephaly is a birth defect where the baby’s head size is much smaller than normal. It is unclear when during pregnancy the Zika infection is most likely to cause microcephaly. At this time, pregnant women should avoid all travel to areas where there is active Zika. Currently there is no evidence that prior Zika infection poses any risk to future pregnancies. The CDC has posted interim guidelines to help health care providers counsel pregnant women with potential exposure to the Zika virus.

What do we know about the spread of Zika through sex?
At this time, we do not know how long the Zika virus stays in the semen of infected men or how long the virus can spread through sex. However, the virus stays in semen longer than in blood. Abstaining from intercourse is the best way to prevent spreading Zika. Other than abstaining, using a condom correctly from start to finish every time you have sex, including vaginal, anal, or oral (mouth to penis), for 6 months after the male partner returns from Zika-active places can help decrease the risk of spread.
**Can you get Zika in Oregon?**
There have been NO cases of local transmission of Zika in the continental US. There have been travel-associated cases. While these cases may potentially create opportunities for local spread throughout mosquito bites, this is unlikely to occur in Oregon. According to the CDC's best estimate for the potential range of the Aedes species of mosquito responsible for Zika spread, the mosquito will not be present as far north as Oregon. However, there have been three cases of sexual transmission in the US. So there still is a chance of spread through sexual contact with a male infected while traveling to a place where Zika is present.

**Can you test for Zika?**
Yes, there are blood tests available to test for Zika infection. They are typically drawn at least four days after the initial symptoms occur. Talk with one of our providers if you would like more information about whether you are a candidate for testing.

**What should you do if you are planning a trip outside of the United States?**
If you plan on traveling outside of the United States, make sure to visit JBT for a free travel consultation!

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control website. For more information, check the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov).