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Zika virus - A new threat

The three people found infected with the Zika in Ahmedabad, Gujarat have no history of travel to Zika-affected countries. The implication of this is that the transmission of the Zika in Ahmedabad could be local and that the disease is already prevalent in the area, said experts. Whatever the case may be, it is surely the right time to know the Zika Virus



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“There is no vaccine to protect against Zika virus disease. It is recommended that all pregnant women avoid traveling to areas where there is an outbreak of Zika virus. If you are trying to become pregnant, talk to your doctor about your upcoming travel plans and the risk of getting infected with Zika virus. If you have a male partner who lives in or has travelled to an area where there is an outbreak of Zika virus, then abstain from sex during pregnancy or use a condom during sexual contact.”

Zika virus disease is a mosquito-borne viral infection that primarily occurs in tropical and subtropical areas of the world. Most people infected with Zika virus have no signs and symptoms, while others report mild fever, rash and muscle pain. Other signs and symptoms may include headache, red eyes (conjunctivitis) and a general feeling of discomfort.

Zika virus infections during pregnancy have been linked to miscarriage and can cause microcephaly, a potentially fatal congenital brain condition. Zika virus also may cause other neurological disorders such as Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Researchers are working on a Zika virus vaccine. For now the best prevention is to prevent mosquito bites and reduce mosquito habitats.

Symptoms -

As many as four out of five people infected with Zika virus have no signs or symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they usually begin two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Signs and symptoms of Zika virus disease most commonly include:

- ▲ mild fever
- ▲ rash
- ▲ joint or muscle pain
- ▲ headache
- ▲ red eyes (conjunctivitis)

Most people recover fully, with symptoms resolving in about a week. No specific antiviral treatment for Zika virus disease exists. Treatment is aimed at relieving symptoms with rest, fluids and medications — such as

acetaminophen and ibuprofen - to relieve joint pain and fever.

Prevention

No vaccine exists to prevent Zika virus. If you are living or traveling in tropical areas where Zika virus is known to be, these tips may help reduce your risk of mosquito bites:

- ▲ Stay in air-conditioned or well-screened housing. The mosquitoes that carry the Zika virus are most active from dawn to dusk, but they can also bite at night. Consider sleeping under a mosquito bed net, especially if you are outside.
- ▲ Wear protective clothing. When you go into mosquito-infested areas, wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, socks and shoes.
- ▲ Use mosquito repellent. Permethrin can be applied to your clothing, shoes, camping gear and bed netting. You also can buy clothing made with permethrin already in it. For your skin, use a repellent containing at least a 10 percent concentration of DEET.
- ▲ When used as directed, insect repellents that are authority approved are proven safe and effective for pregnant and breast-feeding women.
- ▲ Reduce mosquito habitat. The mosquitoes that carry the Zika virus typically live in and around houses, breeding in standing water that can collect in such things as animal dishes, flower pots and used automobile tires. Reduce the breeding habitat to lower mosquito populations.



Heatstroke - Are you at risk?

With rising temperature every year, it is estimated that heat related illnesses will increase multi-fold. Most common are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke, and heat stroke can lead to death. Experts project that extreme heat events will become more frequent, last longer and be more severe.



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“Eat right. Keep your house cool by preparing meals that don't need to be cooked in the oven or on the stove (Cold Cooking). Eat foods that are higher in water content, such as fruits (watermelon and other melons, grapes, oranges and other citrus fruits) and vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce and other leafy greens). Fruits and vegetables not only provide water, they also help in replacing minerals lost via sweat. However, be aware that too much fruit juice may cause diarrhea in some cases, which can make dehydration worse. Don't take salt tablets unless directed by your doctor. The easiest and safest way to replace mineral loss is with food.”

Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating; weakness; cold, pale, clammy skin; a fast but weak pulse; fainting; and nausea or vomiting.

Signs of heat stroke include hot, red skin that may be dry or moist; a rapid pulse; high body temperature (above 103 F, or 39 C); confusion; and change in consciousness.

Are you at risk?

Adults age 65 or older, infants and children age 4 or younger are most vulnerable to heat-related illness because they have a limited ability to regulate body temperature. Other factors that increase the risk include:

- ▲ Heat and humidity. Usually public media announce temperature and humidity that meet or exceed criteria which can be dangerous.
- ▲ Chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, pulmonary disease, poor circulation, poorly controlled diabetes or mental illness, and some medications, such as diuretics.
- ▲ Acute illness with fever, diarrhea or vomiting, and inability to drink adequate liquids.
- ▲ Conditions that make it more difficult to regulate body temperature, such as being obese or being sunburnt.
- ▲ Drinking alcohol or beverages containing large amounts of sugar.
- ▲ Spending more time outdoors because of your job or by choice when heat and humidity are high.

Heat stroke symptoms include:

- ▲ High body temperature. A body temperature of 103 F (39 C) or higher is the main sign of heatstroke.

- ▲ Altered mental state or behavior. Confusion, agitation, slurred speech, irritability, delirium, seizures and coma can all result from heatstroke.
- ▲ Alteration in sweating. In heatstroke brought on by hot weather, your skin will feel hot and dry to the touch. However, in heatstroke brought on by strenuous exercise, your skin may feel moist.
- ▲ Nausea, vomiting and pain in abdomen
- ▲ Flushed skin. Your skin may turn red as your body temperature increases.
- ▲ Rapid breathing. Your breathing may become rapid and shallow.
- ▲ Racing heart rate. Your pulse may significantly increase because heat stress places a tremendous burden on your heart to help cool your body.
- ▲ Headache. Your head may throb.

Do you know what to do to prevent heat-related illness? Diet plays a role. Here's how to reduce your risk of heat-related illness:

- ▲ Stay cool. If you have air-conditioning, use it. Take a cool shower or bath, or use a mist bottle to cool down.
- ▲ Drink more fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Drink enough cool fluids, such as water or sports drinks, each hour to maintain normal urine output.
- ▲ Wear loose fitting, light weight clothing. Wearing excess clothing or clothing that fits tightly won't allow your body to cool properly.
- ▲ Protect against sunburn with a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15 at least.



Burns - First Aid

Coping with a serious burn injury can be a challenge, especially if it covers large areas of your body. Potential scarring, reduced mobility and possible surgeries add to the burden. It is always desirable to know your first aid options for controlling the impact of injury. Knowing these tips may help you save someone's life -



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“Do consider a lotion and pain relievers once a burn is completely cooled. Apply a lotion or moisturizer to soothe the area and prevent dryness. For sunburn, try 1 percent hydrocortisone cream or an anesthetic cream. The gel from the leaf of an Aloe vera plant can also help soothe a burn. A nonprescription pain reliever may help.”

For minor burns:

- ▲ Cool the burn to help soothe the pain. Hold the burned area under cool (not cold) running water for 10 to 15 minutes or until the pain eases. Or apply a clean towel dampened with cool tap water.
- ▲ Remove rings or other tight items from the burned area. Try to do this quickly and gently, before the area swells.
- ▲ Don't break small blisters (no bigger than your little fingernail). If blisters break, gently clean the area with mild soap and water, apply an antibiotic ointment, and cover it with a nonstick gauze bandage.
- ▲ Apply moisturizer or aloe vera lotion or gel, which may provide relief in some cases.
- ▲ If needed, take an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- ▲ Consider a tetanus shot. Make sure that your tetanus booster is up to date. Doctors recommend people get a tetanus shot at least every 10 years.

See your doctor if you develop large blisters. Large blisters are best removed, as they rarely will remain intact on their own.

Major burns

Call for emergency medical help for major burns. Until an emergency unit arrives, take these actions:

- ▲ Protect the burned person from further harm. If you can do so safely, make sure the person you're helping is not in contact with smoldering materials or exposed to smoke or

heat. But don't remove burned clothing stuck to the skin.

- ▲ Check for signs of circulation. Look for breathing, coughing or movement.
- ▲ Remove jewellery, belts and other restrictive items, especially from around burned areas and the neck. Burned areas swell rapidly.
- ▲ Don't immerse large severe burns in cold water. Doing so could cause a serious loss of body heat (hypothermia) or a drop in blood pressure and decreased blood flow (shock).
- ▲ Elevate the burned area. Raise the wound above heart level, if possible.
- ▲ Cover the area of the burn. Use a cool, moist, bandage or a clean cloth.

How to judge the extent of tissue damage -

1st-degree burn:

It involves only the outer layer of skin & may cause redness, swelling & pain.

2nd-degree burn:

It is more serious as it may cause red, white or splotchy skin, swelling, pain & blisters

If the burned area is larger or covers the hands, feet, face, groin, buttocks or a major joint, treat it as a major burn and get medical help immediately.

3rd-degree burns:

It is the most serious burn & involves all layers of the skin and underlying fat. Muscle and even bone may be affected. Burned areas may be charred black or white. The person may experience difficulty in breathing, carbon monoxide poisoning & other toxic effects, if smoke inhalation has also occurred.