



Prevention of Zika Virus Infection

Key Points for Counseling Women of Reproductive Age

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Background

This brief summarizes key points to include when counseling women of reproductive age on prevention of Zika virus (ZIKV) infection. Institutionalizing counseling practices described here may contribute to a health system that is more resilient to possible future outbreaks of ZIKV infection. The evidence on ZIKV continues to evolve, so country governments and health providers should stay abreast of new recommendations from reliable sources, such as the World Health Organization,¹ the Pan American Health Organization,² the Caribbean Public Health Agency,³ and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴ While not all guidelines from these sources may be immediately feasible for all areas, the information on ZIKV prevention included in this brief is generally accepted as broadly applicable to different regions. This guidance does not replace general counseling on ZIKV infection and its potential risks (including in pregnancy) or comprehensive training on counseling skills for health providers. Thorough counseling for women of reproductive age on prevention of ZIKV infection must include counseling on modern methods of family planning. Providers are advised to seek additional resources, such as the US Agency for International Development's Training Resource Package for Family Planning,⁵ to maintain these skills.

Protect against Mosquito Bites

Using effective insect repellents correctly and consistently can reduce the risk of getting mosquito bites. The following repellents are proven safe and effective when used as directed and should be used for the duration of a pregnancy: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus in commercially available formulations. These products are safe to use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The effectiveness of other repellents is unknown. Always follow instructions on product labels and reapply as recommended. Insect repellent should not be sprayed on skin that is under clothing and should be applied after sunscreen, if sunscreen is used. Where feasible, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants may also reduce mosquito bites. Women are often primary caretakers for children, so related messages may be appropriate for these clients. When applying insect repellent to children, follow package instructions, and do not apply to a child's hands, eyes, mouth, or skin with cuts or irritation. Spray repellent onto an adult's hands and then apply to a child's face. Do not use oil of lemon eucalyptus on children under 3 years old. No insect repellent should be used on babies under 2 months old.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). 2016. Zika virus fact sheet. WHO website. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en>. [September 6, 2016.]

² Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Zika virus infection. PAHO website. http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11585%3Azika-virus-infection&catid=8424%3Acontents&Itemid=41688&lang=en.

³ Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). 2018. Zika virus infection. CARPHA website. <http://carpha.org/zika>.

⁴ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2018. Zika Virus. CDC website. <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>.

⁵ K4Health. 2018. Family Planning Counseling. The Training Resource Package for Family Planning website. <https://www.fptraining.org/projects/family-planning-counseling>.

Reduce Mosquitos Inside and Outside at Home

Mosquitos that carry ZIKV often bite during daytime hours and inside homes. If available, use screens on windows and doors, and repair holes in screens to keep mosquitos outside. Use air conditioning where available. Using a mosquito bed net for daytime sleeping may reduce the chance of getting mosquito bites. If available, allow vector control teams into the home and community to apply larvicide. Cover water storage containers at all times with a cover that is tight fitting and does not warp or touch the water. Scrub walls of water storage containers once a week with a brush to remove mosquito eggs and empty standing water from indoor plant trays. Once a week, empty and scrub with a brush, turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water.

Protect against Unintended Pregnancy and Sexual Transmission of ZIKV

Avoiding unplanned pregnancy is a very important way to prevent a ZIKV-affected pregnancy, so comprehensive family planning counseling and access are critical for all women of reproductive age and their partners. Couples desiring pregnancy should consider waiting 6 months after ZIKV infection diagnosis/start of symptoms before having unprotected sex. Using male or female condoms can prevent sexual transmission of ZIKV in pregnancy. For condoms to be effective, they should be used correctly every time during vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Pregnant couples, those trying to become pregnant, and those who live in an area with ongoing risk of ZIKV infection should use condoms from start to finish every time they have sex or should not have sex for the entire pregnancy. Uninfected couples living in an area with risk of ZIKV infection should use condoms or not have sex if they are concerned about passing or getting ZIKV through sex.

Provide Client-Centered Counseling

Many different approaches to effective client counseling have been proposed, and no single approach is the “right one.” One general strategy is outlined below, based on recommendations for contraceptive counseling, which may help providers to create an effective, client-centered encounter.⁶ To provide high-quality care and counseling, providers must understand and respect clients’ needs, attitudes, and concerns.⁷ Every woman has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, which includes the right to dignified, respectful care.⁸



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⁶ Gavin L, Moskosky S, Carter M, et al. 2014. Providing quality family planning services: recommendations of CDC and the U.S. Office of Population Affairs. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 63(RR04):1–29.

⁷ Creel LC, Sass JC, Yinger NV. 2002. *Client-Centered Quality: Clients’ Perspectives and Barriers to Receiving Care*. Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau.

⁸ WHO. 2015. *The Prevention and Elimination of Disrespect and Abuse during Facility-Based Childbirth*. Geneva: WHO.