

FACTS ABOUT ZIKV

- The zika virus (ZIKV) is spread by the bite of the aedes aegypti mosquito.

· Aedes aegypti is easily recognised by the contrasting black and white rings on its legs, and the lyre-shaped pattern of silver markings on the upper surface of the thorax. · ZIKV is transmitted from human to human, by the bites of infected mosquitoes of the aedes species, particularly the Aedes aegypti, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya (chik-V). It can also be transmitted through perinatal, sexual intercourse and blood transfusion. · The virus was first isolated in 1947 from rhesus monkey samples, in the Zika forest in Uganda. The virus was named after the region where it was first collected. · Symptoms of ZIKV include: mild to severe fever, rash, red eyes, joint pains, headache, muscle pain, swelling in lower limbs, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain · Symptoms are usually experienced three to 12 days after being bitten by the infected mosquito. Symptoms will usually last two to seven days and are self-limiting. · Symptoms are similar to dengue and chik-V · Infants, the elderly, pregnant women and persons with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension and sickle cell diseases, are at greater risk for more severe symptoms. · Among the complications that can develop from contracting ZIKV are birth defects (microcephaly) in newborns, paralysis, neurological and auto immune disorders, and death. · There are no specific medication for the treatment of ZIKV. Medication can be taken to reduce the fever, pain and other symptoms. However, only paracetamol should be taken. Do not take pain killers such as aspirin, ibuprofen and anti-inflammatory drugs · Persons who think they have ZIKV should: take paracetamol for the symptoms, report to the nearest health centre or your doctor if the symptoms persist, drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of rest, avoid mosquito bites. · There is no vaccine to prevent the zika virus, although one is currently being developed · Similar to dengue and chik-V, ZIKV is now endemic to Jamaica. The aedes aegypti mosquito is also common to Jamaica. · Jamaica has 68 species of mosquitoes, but only one type feeds only on humans and transmit diseases - the Aedes aegypti - and it is the only type that breeds in domestic environment, such as right inside your home and yard. · Use mosquito repellents, wear long sleeve and long clothing to minimise skin exposure, wear light-coloured clothing, keep environment free of mosquito breeding sites, check premises regular for any body of water that could be potential breeding sites. · Maintain a well-balanced diet, get regular exercise and ensure you maintain a strong immune system and optimum health. · The World Health Organisation has declared the zika virus a public health emergency of international concern, posing greater risk to infants, pregnant women, the elderly and persons with pre-existing medical conditions.