

# BUG BITES GETTING UNDER YOUR SKIN?

## LEARN ABOUT ZIKA AND OTHER INSECT-RELATED ILLNESSES



As the weather warms, most of us look forward to outdoor activities: cookouts, hiking and sports. Unfortunately, this time of year also increases our exposure to insect bites and related illnesses. One such concern is the Zika virus.

The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne illness that can cause a range of health issues from fevers to birth defects. Though most cases have been concentrated in Latin America, many people wonder if this worry will travel north as the temperatures rise. At the same time, other insects, such as ticks, can pose a potential health risk.

Puneet Chopra, MD, chair and medical director of Observation and Emergency Services at Doctors Community Hospital, helps us learn more about insect bites. Also, he shares how we can protect ourselves and our loved ones.

### Should I be worried about Zika?

If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends avoiding travel to Central and South America and the Caribbean, where Zika risk is high.<sup>1</sup> You should also know that Zika can be transmitted through sexual contact. To protect yourself, use condoms and take measures to avoid mosquito bites. Discuss the risks with your physician.

### How is the Zika virus treated?

There is not a vaccine or cure for this disease. Also, most people who are infected do not become sick enough to require hospital care. Doctors often treat the various symptoms of the disease by advising people to rest, drink fluids to prevent dehydration and take acetaminophen to decrease pain or fever.

### How can I avoid mosquito and other bug bites this season?

A few of the steps to take include:

- + Applying DEET-containing insect repellent and following the instructions on the product label
- + Wearing clothing that covers arms and legs when outdoors
- + Treating clothing and outdoor gear—not skin— with insect repellent permethrin
- + Emptying standing water in dog bowls, birdbaths, watering cans and other outdoor objects that can serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes

Remember, babies ages two months and younger should not wear insect repellent. Protect them by covering their arms and legs with clothing or a mosquito net placed over their strollers.

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/s0315-zika-virus-travel.html>, January 17, 2016

### What else should I know about the risk of insect bites?

Most bites can be treated with an antihistamine and over-the counter ointment for itching or burning. This chart will help you learn how to recognize some of the common bites or stings.

INSECT	BITE APPEARANCE	RISK OF DISEASE	SYMPTOMS OF DISEASE
Mosquitoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, round pink bumps that can be very itchy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Nile virus</li> <li>• Zika virus - primarily in Central and South America and the Caribbean</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Nile can cause flu-like symptoms including headaches, fever, nausea and joint-stiffness</li> <li>• Fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes and paralysis; linked to birth-defects in some pregnant women</li> </ul>
Ticks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red bump resembling a bull's-eye</li> <li>• Rash of flat, non-itchy spots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lyme disease</li> <li>• Rocky Mountain fever</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever, headaches and fatigue</li> <li>• Fever, headache, nausea, pain or red eyes</li> </ul>
Bees and Wasps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red bump with a white ring around it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allergic reaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid swelling around face or throat, dizziness, difficulty breathing, rash or hives, nausea or loss of consciousness</li> </ul>

People should seek immediate medical care if they have difficulties breathing or the symptoms do not improve within a couple of days.

### Professional Care in Your Community

The board-certified emergency medical specialists in Doctors Community Hospital's Emergency Department are available 24/7. They are trained to treat people who experience severe allergic reactions to plants, foods, chemicals and insect bites. To learn more, visit our website at [DCHweb.org/emergency](http://DCHweb.org/emergency).



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