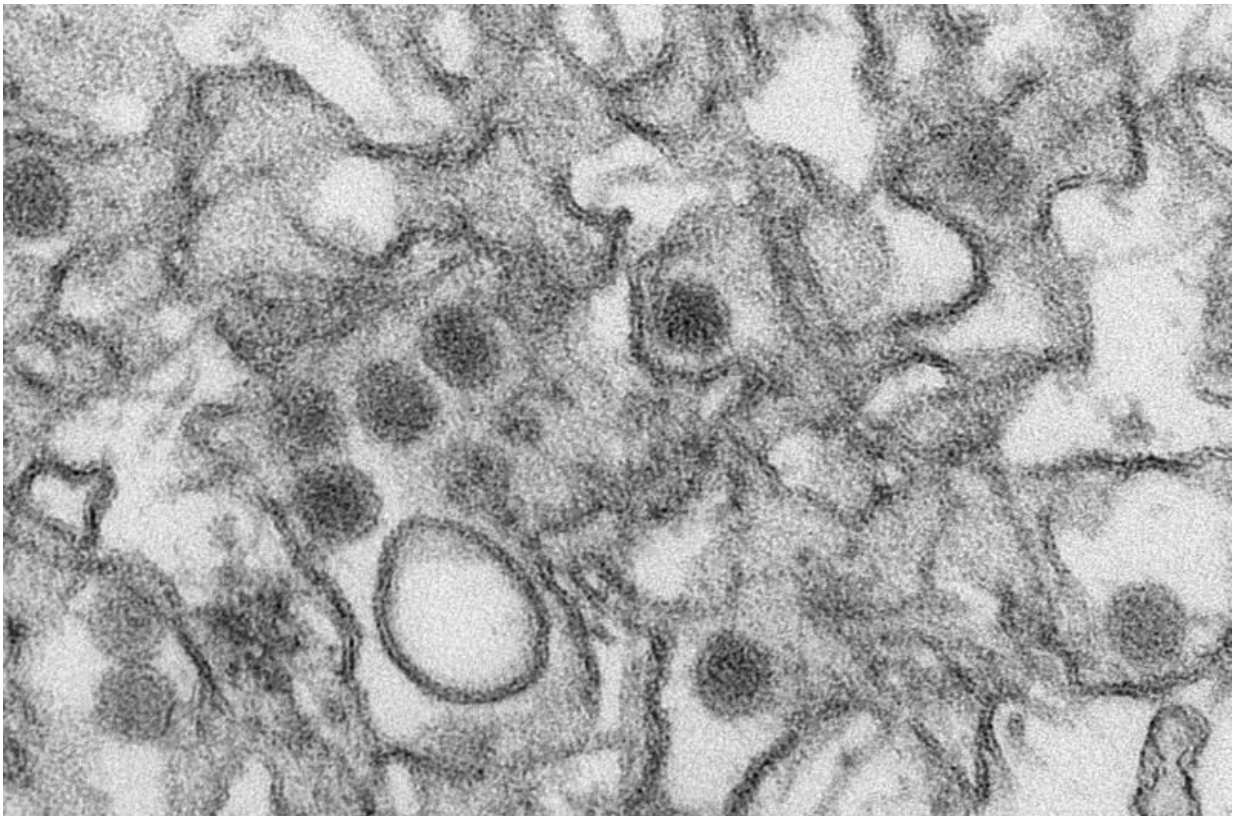


Many in families with pregnant women don't know key facts about Zika

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Transmission electron micrograph (TEM) of Zika virus. Credit: Cynthia Goldsmith/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Many people in U.S. households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant in the next 12 months are not aware of key facts about Zika virus, according to a new poll by Harvard T.H. Chan

School of Public Health researchers. The nationally representative poll of 1,275 adults, including 105 who live in households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant in the next 12 months, was conducted March 2-8, 2016 in cooperation with the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC), an organization serving state and local public health communications officers.

Among people in households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant, the researchers found:

- Approximately one in four (23%) are not aware of the association between Zika virus and the birth defect microcephaly.
- One in five (20%) believe, incorrectly, that there is a vaccine to protect against Zika virus.
- Approximately four in 10 (42%) do not realize Zika virus can be sexually transmitted.
- A quarter (25%) think individuals infected with Zika virus are "very likely" to show symptoms.

Such results suggest this key segment of the population does not have the latest Zika virus information presented by [public health](#) officials.

"We have a key window before the mosquito season gears up in communities within the United States mainland to correct misperceptions about Zika virus so that pregnant women and their partners may take appropriate measures to protect their families," says Gillian SteelFisher, director of the poll and research scientist in the Department of Health Policy and Management at Harvard Chan School.

The general public also has misperceptions about Zika virus, the researchers found.

- Four in 10 mistakenly believe Zika virus infection in women likely to harm future pregnancies

Within the public as a whole, approximately four in 10 (39%) believe that if a woman who is not pregnant gets infected with Zika virus, it is likely ("very" and "somewhat") to harm future pregnancies. This contrasts with the latest scientific evidence reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which suggests "Zika virus infection in a woman who is not pregnant would not pose a risk for birth defects in future pregnancies after the virus has cleared from her blood," which takes about a week.

- Sizable minority mistakenly believe Zika virus is transmitted by coughing and sneezing

While most of the public (87%) understand that Zika virus is transmitted by mosquitoes, many have other facts about transmission wrong. About one in five (22%) are not aware that Zika virus can be transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy and more than a quarter (29%) are unaware it can be transmitted through blood transfusions. Four in 10 (40%) are unaware that it can be transmitted sexually. About a third (31%) believe, incorrectly, that Zika virus is transmitted through coughing and sneezing.

SteelFisher adds, "These misperceptions about Zika virus transmission could lead people to take unnecessary or inappropriate precautions, as we have seen in other kinds of outbreaks."

- Limited public knowledge about symptoms of Zika virus disease

Few people understand that a person who is infected with Zika virus most likely will not show symptoms. Nearly three-quarters (71%) say a person infected with Zika virus is likely ("very" or "somewhat") to show symptoms. Approximately two-thirds (68%) say fever is common if someone does show symptoms, but other symptoms are much less frequently identified (headache 49%; joint pain 41%; rash 34%; conjunctivitis or red eyes 18%). Further, approximately a third (35%) believe incorrectly that coughing and sneezing are symptoms of Zika virus disease.

- Many unaware of link between Zika virus and Guillain-Barré

Nearly three-quarters of the public (71%) are unaware of a link between Zika virus and Guillain-Barré syndrome, which can cause paralysis.

- Most support mosquitos spraying if there are cases of Zika virus where they live

Most people say they would approve of mosquito spraying if there were cases of Zika virus in their city or town. More than four out of five (81%) would approve of ground spraying, and approximately two-thirds (66%) would approve of spraying from the air.

- Majority routinely take personal precautions against mosquitoes during the summer

Two-thirds of the public (67%) say they routinely take personal precautions during the summer to avoid getting mosquito bites. In total, more than half say they wear mosquito repellent (56%) or remove standing water (55%). Just under half replace or repair window screens (46%) or avoid activities and areas that would

bring them into contact with mosquitos (43%). Fewer (39%) say they wear long sleeves and only a small fraction (16%) use mosquito netting.

- Public is paying attention to Zika virus, but most are not concerned about getting infected

Approximately three-quarters of the public (78%) are following the news about the current outbreak of Zika virus, including about half (52%) who say they are following the news "very" or "somewhat" closely. Only a quarter of the public (25%) say they are concerned ("very" or "somewhat") that they or someone in their immediate family may get infected with Zika [virus](#) in the next 12 months.

Provided by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

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