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Zika Virus Protection for Outdoor Workers

Credit: CDC / James Gathany

Outdoor workers may be at the greatest risk of exposure to Zika virus, which is primarily spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes. Your employer should inform you about the risk of exposure through mosquito bites and how to protect yourself.

Signs and Symptoms of Zika Infection

• Fever • Rash • Joint pain • Pink or red eyes
• Muscle pain • Headache

OSHA recommends that your employer:

- Train you on how to protect yourself and about the importance of eliminating areas where mosquitoes breed at your worksite.
- Provide insect repellents and protective clothing for your exposed skin, and encourage their use.

How to Protect Yourself:

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin or another EPA-registered active ingredient on skin that is not covered by clothing. Always follow label precautions.
- If using permethrin, spray it on clothing and gear only—not directly on skin.

For more information:

U.S. Department of Labor

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OSHA 3880-07 2016

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- Choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that you will be outdoors.
- After returning indoors and before eating, use soap and water to wash skin that has been treated with insect repellent. Reapply repellent when returning outdoors or after eating.
- Wear clothing that covers all of your skin, including socks that cover the ankles and lower legs and hats with mosquito netting to protect the face and neck.
- In warm weather, wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing. This type of clothing protects you from the sun and provides a barrier to mosquitoes.
- Get rid of sources of standing water (e.g., tires, buckets, cans, bottles, barrels) whenever possible to reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding areas.
- OSHA and NIOSH recommend that you talk to your supervisor(s) about any outdoor work assignment(s) or travel to Zika-affected areas if you are or may become pregnant, or, for males, if your sexual partner is or may become pregnant. Consult CDC information on Zika virus and pregnancy: www.cdc.gov/zika.
- If you routinely work with insecticides to control mosquitoes, you may require additional personal protective equipment.
- If symptoms develop, seek medical attention promptly. Discuss any possible exposure to mosquitoes or infections spread by mosquitoes with a healthcare provider.

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