

UNDERSTANDING ZIKA

Relevant for: Health, Education & Human Resources | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Zika, a flavivirus spread mainly by mosquitoes, belongs to the same genus as dengue and chikungunya. Some evidence that Zika has been in India for long comes from a 1954 survey, which found several Indians with Zika antibodies. However, this evidence wasn't conclusive, because other flaviviruses, like dengue, can also trigger Zika-neutralising antibodies. The first confirmed Indian case occurred in 2016 in Gujarat. Later, three more cases were detected, before the 2018 Rajasthan outbreak. Despite its long presence in Asia, Zika outbreaks in this region have been benign. This changed with a large French Polynesian outbreak in 2013 and a larger Brazilian one in 2015.

In Rajasthan, where 72 have been infected, Zika is causing fever, rash, muscle and joint pain. But the French Polynesian and Brazilian outbreaks were linked to deadlier conditions such as microcephaly, in which the child of a Zika-infected mother is born with an abnormally small head. In rare cases, patients also developed Guillain-Barre syndrome, which causes potentially fatal muscle weakness. Indian officials are watching out for these complications, since the Rajasthan strain is closely related to the Brazilian strain.

First, Rajasthan's residents may not have been exposed to Zika before, and thus lack immunity. According to Nathan D. Grubaugh, a Zika genomics researcher at the Yale School of Public Health, American studies show that if 50-60% of a population is exposed to the virus, herd immunity develops and transmission stops. Another possibility is that mutations in the Rajasthan strain are helping it spread. More research is needed to identify such mutations. The third explanation is that even though Zika has been around, it is being detected only now because we are looking. Until 2016, when Zika was declared a WHO global health emergency, India wasn't testing for Zika.

Not much, unless you are pregnant. Zika is usually short-lived. Pregnant women should be tested and should avoid travel to outbreak areas. Infection can be prevented through mosquito fogging and not allowing water to stagnate. There is no vaccine yet, but many vaccines are in trials, including one from Bharat Biotech.

Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!

Please enter a valid email address.

Last week Ram Kadam, a BJP MLA from Maharashtra, told the men in an audience that if they were interested in women who didn't reciprocate the feeling,

Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com