

What Is Congenital Zika Syndrome?

A birth defect is a type of health condition present at birth that includes abnormal differences in a baby's body. Birth defects can cause problems with development and overall health.

Congenital Zika syndrome is a group of birth defects caused by infection with the Zika virus (ZIKV) that took place in pregnancy, whether or not the woman knew she was infected with ZIKV. Babies with congenital Zika syndrome may also have other serious health and developmental problems.



Photo Credit: NBC News

HOW DOES CZS OCCUR?

- ZIKV is passed to a pregnant woman by an infected mosquito or through sexual transmission.
- The virus may then pass through the placenta to the baby.
- ZIKV infection damages the normal development of the baby.
- The chance of severe birth defects is greatest if ZIKV infection took place in the first trimester (first 13 weeks of pregnancy), when most of the baby's organs are still being formed.

FEATURES OF CZS THAT MAY OCCUR

- Severe microcephaly (smaller-than-normal head)
- Decreased brain tissue and specific patterns of brain damage
- Vision problems due to damage to the back of the eye in the areas needed for clear vision.
- Hearing problems
- Limb deformities, including clubfoot and other problems
 - Nervous system problems, including seizures
 - Difficulty swallowing and feeding
 - Developmental delays
 - Sometimes no detectable features are immediately apparent.

PREVENTION

The only way to prevent congenital Zika syndrome is to prevent ZIKV infection. This is done by protecting oneself from mosquito bites and getting rid of mosquito breeding sites (i.e., standing water).

One can also prevent sexual transmission of Zika by using condoms or not having sex.

There is no vaccine at this time to prevent ZIKV infection.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
Zika – Microcephaly and Other Birth Defects https://www.cdc.gov/zika/healtheffects/birth_defects.html

If you have concerns about your child's health, growth, or development, seek more information from the health centre in your area and the Ministry of Health.

This information is made possible by USAID and the Maternal and Child Survival Program and does not reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

