Zika virus is primarily spread to people through Aedes species mosquito bites. Aedes mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and feed both indoors and outdoors. Zika virus can be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth. We do not know how often Zika perinatal transmission occurs. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus become symptomatic.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). There have been cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome reported in patients following suspected Zika virus infection. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon.

Outbreaks of Zika have occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. Because the Aedes species mosquitoes that spread Zika virus are found throughout the world, it is likely that outbreaks will spread to new countries. In December 2015, Puerto Rico reported its first confirmed Zika virus case. Locally transmitted Zika has not been reported elsewhere in the United States, but cases of Zika have been reported in returning travelers.

There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika. Travelers can protect themselves from this disease by taking steps to prevent mosquito bites. When traveling to countries where Zika virus or other viruses spread by mosquitoes have been reported, use insect repellent, wear long sleeves and pants, and stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens.

For more detailed information regarding prevention, transmission, symptoms and treatment, please visit the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.