



AUSTRALIAN
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Australian Paralympic Committee Medical Update - February 2016

Zika Virus

The **Zika** virus was first identified in Africa and has been present in Brazil for a number of years, but there has been a recent significant increase in the number of infections during 2015, prompting the involvement of the World Health organization who now list it as their current major priority.

Medical information continues to evolve week by week, but at this stage:

- It is an infection transmitted by mosquitoes.
- It is predominately seen across northern regional areas of Brazil rather than in the city of Rio de Janeiro.
- Most people, following a mosquito bite and infection, do not get any symptoms at all. However, about 20% develop fevers, headache, myalgia and rash – flu-like symptoms - which then resolve over a few days.
- In pregnant women, during the first trimester of pregnancy, when the baby's neural system is developing, acute infection can potentially lead to abnormalities with normal development and microcephaly. It is thought that these risks only relate to acute infection.
- A woman who develops symptoms while in Brazil, but fully recovers and subsequently falls pregnant is not thought to be at increased risk.
- Yellow Fever, Dengue Fever and Malaria are much more serious medical conditions and APC recommend vaccination for athletes and officials travelling to Rio.
- Gastroenteritis remains probably a greater risk, to the health and performance of our athletes, staff, family and friends than all of the above infections combined.
- Large bodies or stagnant water and hot / humid conditions are perfect for the mosquito population. Brazilian authorities are actively cleaning up these areas in preparation for Rio 2016, and the city environment as well as cooler weather during September reduces the risk considerably.

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- Risk to athletes, staff, family and friends can be reduced by encouraging:
 - regular use of a 20% DEET repellent 2-3 x/day
 - simple measures to limit mosquito bites such as covering exposed skin on arms and legs where practical and windows closed / air -conditioning on within the apartments, especially at night
- Women who are pregnant at the time of travel to Brazil or who plan to fall pregnant around that time should seek specific, individual medical advice.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact APC Manager, Performance Services, Keren Faulkner on 0418 837 054.

Dr Corey Cunningham
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