

## CDC issues Zika guidance for schools

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When schools welcome students back this fall, they should be proactive about preventing Zika virus and know how to respond if cases arise, according to federal health officials.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has **released new guidance** detailing the steps K-12 schools should and should not take.

“We want schools to feel informed and prepared for Zika virus whether it’s a travel-associated case in a child or staff member, or planning for the possibility of local transmission,” said Eric Dziuban, M.D., D.T.M., FAAP, team lead for the CDC’s Children’s Preparedness Unit.

Zika virus is spread primarily through infected *Aedes* mosquitoes, although it also can be sexually transmitted. There have been more than 1,300 cases in U.S. states among travelers or sexual partners of travelers, but none yet caused by local mosquitoes. However, CDC leaders say that could change this summer.

When the virus is spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus, it can cause microcephaly and other brain abnormalities in the baby. However, children and adults who contract it from mosquitoes typically have no symptoms or mild symptoms such as fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis.

The CDC made the following recommendations to schools:

- Proactively communicate with public health authorities and families about preventing mosquito transmission.
- Prevent mosquito transmission by getting rid of standing water on the property, mowing the grass and using window screens or air conditioning if possible.
- Instruct students and staff spending time outdoors to wear long pants and sleeves when possible and use insect repellent. Consider risks associated with outdoor field trips, and modify staff responsibilities if necessary to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes.
- Provide age-appropriate education on using condoms or abstinence to prevent sexual transmission of Zika and on the risk of birth defects if the virus is passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus.
- Manage symptoms according to school illness policies. Do not remove or isolate Zika-infected students or staff members or issue schoolwide notification. Privacy should be maintained.
- If transmission is occurring in the community, it is not necessary to cancel classes or outdoor activities. However, students or staff who are pregnant or trying to conceive may request their time outdoors be limited.

Child care facilities, camps and colleges should consider similar strategies and can find toolkits tailored to their setting at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/toolkits.html>.

The CDC drafted its interim guidance for schools with input from the Academy and other experts. Dr. Dziuban said the advice could be applied across the country, even in areas where Zika is unlikely to be transmitted locally because the *Aedes* mosquitoes do not live there.

“Many of these are good commonsense approaches that will help reduce mosquito bites and any associated diseases,” he said.

Pediatricians also should familiarize themselves with the guidance.

“We know schools often engage with pediatricians and communicate closely with them for health-related matters ... so we feel pediatricians can play a role in understanding this guidance, communicating with schools about it and providing help in cases where a child’s health may be of concern,” Dr. Dziuban said.

### **Resources**

- [CDC Zika website](#)
- [AAP Zika website](#)
- [Information for clinicians](#)
- [Information for parents](#)
- [AAP News story “Zika update: CDC issues new directives for pediatricians”](#)

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