

Zika Evidence Seen in Semen After Record 6 Months

The finding could change health guidance on how long couples should wait to conceive.



Samples of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which carry Zika, in a petri dish.

Evidence of the virus was found in patients' semen more than 180 days after symptoms began in two recent studies. The Associated Press

Two newly published studies suggest the Zika virus can stay in a man's semen for six months, which is twice as long as previously seen.

Reports published this week in the journal *Eurosurveillance* showed that one man's semen showed evidence of Zika 188 days after the onset of his symptoms, while evidence was detectable in another man's semen after 181 days. Both men had taken trips to Haiti. Previously, the longest the virus – which can be spread by mosquitoes and transmitted sexually – had been detected in semen was after 93 days, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention had recommended that men with Zika wait at least six months after the onset of symptoms before trying to conceive a child with their partner.

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The World Health Organization has made similar recommendations, the authors of the 181-day report noted.

"At the light of this new evidence on long-term ... persistence in semen, an extension of this interval might be considered," they wrote. They also noted that evidence of the virus in semen doesn't necessarily mean an "infective" virus is present.

Still, health officials are concerned about pregnant women becoming infected with Zika because it can cause them to give birth to babies with Microcephaly, a birth defect that can entail an abnormally small head and brain damage.

In adults, serious symptoms are rare. And because infected people may not know they are, it's possible they may unknowingly transmit the virus to a pregnant partner.

The CDC additionally has advised that people who have traveled to an area where Zika is present and are not planning a pregnancy – and do not have Zika symptoms – use condoms or abstain from sex for at least eight weeks.

The record for Zika's presence in semen may continue to rise. The virus is still not well understood, and the CDC has said it will pay men who have been infected with the virus to provide semen samples for testing and research.

Reference:

USA NEWS & WORLD REPORT: <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-08-12>;
By Kimberly Leonard | Staff Writer Aug. 12, 2016, at 4:29 p.m.