

Current major event

New Classification for Zika Virus

WHO, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US-CDC) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have developed a new Zika virus (ZIKV) classification scheme. The classification serves to categorize the presence of and potential for vector-borne ZIKV transmission and to inform public health recommendations.

Editorial note

The geographical distribution of ZIKV has expanded worldwide, particularly since 2015 in the Americas. As of February 2017, a total of 84 countries and territories reported cases of microcephaly and other central nervous system malformations associated with ZIKV infection. There are significant knowledge gaps around ZIKV and a lack of historical data on its vectors, transmission dynamics, and geographical distribution. Despite these challenges, there is a global need to better describe the epidemiology of ZIKV transmission in a given place, at a given time in order to allow an assessment of the possibility of ZIKV infection for various populations.

A new classification with 4 categories of ZIKV transmission was developed by WHO and partners in order to help the concerned countries better understand the current situation and to address the long-term control and elimination efforts of the disease and its consequences.

This new classification was defined as follows: Category 1: areas with new introduction or re-introduction with ongoing transmission; Category 2: areas either with evidence of virus circulation before 2015 or areas with ongoing transmission that is no longer in the new or re-introduction phase, but where there is no evidence of interruption; Category 3: areas with interrupted transmission and with potential for future transmission; and finally Category 4: areas with established competent vector but no known documented past or current transmission.

Zika virus (ZIKV) new classification in Eastern Mediterranean Region

Categories	Regional Office	Country / territory / sub-national area	Total
Category 1: Area with new introduction or re-introduction with ongoing transmission.	EMRO	-	0
Category 2: Area either with evidence of virus circulation before 2015 or area with ongoing transmission that is no longer in the new or re-introduction phase, but where there is no evidence of interruption.		-	0
Category 3: Area with interrupted transmission and with potential for future transmission.		-	0
Category 4: Area with established competent vector but no known documented past or current transmission.		Djibouti; Egypt; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Somalia; Sudan; Yemen	8
Total			8

In this classification, *Aedes aegypti* was considered the main competent vector of ZIKV because of its ability to propagate and sustain Zika virus outbreaks. Other mosquito species can be added subsequently depending on new evidence for sustaining Zika virus transmission.

As of April 2017, a total of 84 countries and territories around the world have reported transmission of Zika virus infection, of which 61 areas have ongoing transmission with new introduction or reintroduction reported since 2015. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), eight countries have recorded the presence of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, but with no documented past or current cases of Zika virus (category 4), namely: Djibouti, Egypt, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen (*Please see the table above*).

Despite the fact that no country in the EMR has reported either local transmission or importation of the Zika virus, countries need to be vigilant in order to prevent spread of the ZIKV. Epidemiological, laboratory and vector surveillance need to be strengthened at the national and sub-national levels to detect any sign of local transmission or importation. At the moment, global risk assessment of the disease has not changed. Zika virus continues to spread geographically to areas where competent vectors are present. Although a decline in cases of the viral infection has been reported in some countries, or parts of the countries, vigilance needs to be maintained at all times in the Region.

Update on outbreaks in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia; **Cholera** in Somalia; **Cholera** in Yemen; **Chikungunya** in Pakistan.

Current public health events of international concern [cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian Influenza: 2006-2017

Egypt (A/H5N1)	[358 (122), 34.08%]
Egypt (A/H9N2)	[3 (0)]

Chikungunya: 2016-2017

Pakistan	[1886 (0)]
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MERS-CoV: 2012-2017

Saudi Arabia	[1,586 (640), 40.4%]
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Cholera: 2016-2017

Somalia	[25,424 (524), 2.1%]
Yemen	[24,506 (108), 0.44%]

Meningococcal disease: 2017

Nigeria	[1407 (211), 15%]
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Avian Influenza A (H7N9): 2013-2017

China	[1,320 (492), 37.3%]
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Yellow fever

Brazil	[1,561 (264), 16.9%]
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Wild poliovirus: 2014-2017

Pakistan	[382 (0)]
Afghanistan	[64 (0)]

Zika Virus Infection: 2015-2017

84 countries and territories have reported transmission so far.