

# A Guide to Effective Zika Coverage for Video, Print and Web

## How to Better Inform the Public



In August 2016, there were more than 1,950 cases of Zika virus in the continental U.S. from travel abroad, and more than 20 cases in Florida likely to have come from infected mosquitoes there. Though most people know Zika is spread by a mosquito and can be sexually transmitted, the Annenberg Science Knowledge (ASK) survey found a lot of misinformation and a lack of urgency:

36% incorrectly think an adult with Zika is likely to die from it

46% incorrectly think Zika always produces noticeable symptoms

57% see themselves at low to moderate risk of infection

70% have not done anything to protect themselves

THE ANNENBERG  
PUBLIC POLICY CENTER  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



Annenberg Science Knowledge Survey



# Three Principles of Effective Media Coverage

1. Communicate Consequential Information
2. Link to CDC, WHO, or other credible sources of information about transmission and prevention
3. Visualize Prevention

## Principle One: Consequential Information - Facts

Zika is a mosquito-borne virus.

**4 out of 5 of those infected with Zika do not show symptoms.**

*Survey results: 46% of respondents incorrectly said that it is accurate to say Zika virus always produces noticeable symptoms.*

### ZIKA SYMPTOMS INCLUDE

fever	rash
conjunctivitis (red eyes)	muscle pain
joint pain	headache

Zika can be sexually transmitted.

Returning travelers from Zika-affected areas can spread the virus through mosquito bites and sex.

Women who contract Zika during their pregnancies are at risk of having babies with severe birth defects.

The most common of these is microcephaly, a condition in which babies are born with underdeveloped brains and skulls.

*Survey results: 72% of respondents correctly said that scientists have established it is true that Zika virus can cause the birth of babies with unusually small heads.*

# Principle One: Consequential Information - Prevention

**Know whether the kinds of mosquitoes able to carry Zika are located where you live, work or travel.**

**Pregnant women should not travel to areas with Zika.**

*Survey results: 24% of respondents identified not traveling to an area with Zika as a way to avoid the negative health effects of Zika.*

For those in areas hospitable to Zika-carrying mosquitoes, prevent Zika transmission by:

## PREVENTING MOSQUITO BITES

Use repellent (EPA registered)

Wear protective clothing/ long-sleeve shirts, pants

Use window/door screens

Remove standing water

*Survey results: 47% of people correctly identified taking steps to protect against mosquito bites as a way to avoid negative health effects of Zika.*

## PRACTICING SAFE SEX

Couples who live in or have traveled to an area with Zika should use a condom from start to finish every time they have vaginal, anal or oral sex during the pregnancy or they should not have sex during the pregnancy.

Couples who live in or have traveled to an area with Zika and have Zika symptoms should wait at least 6 months before trying to get pregnant.

Couples who live in or have traveled to an area with Zika and do not have symptoms should wait at least 8 weeks from the time they might have been exposed to Zika before trying to get pregnant.

Couples who are concerned about sexual transmission and have traveled to an area with Zika or live in an area with Zika should consider using condoms or not having sex for at least 6 months after symptoms begin.

*Survey results: Regarding ways to avoid negative health effects of Zika, 6% correctly said using condoms or not having sex with someone who may have been exposed to Zika and 4% correctly said delaying pregnancy or effective contraception.*

# Principle One: Consequential Information - Examples

All coverage of Zika should contain consequential information about effects, transmission and prevention of Zika.

For example, instead of saying only “Zika,” say “the mosquito-borne Zika virus.”



CBS This Morning, June 10, 2016

”There already are hundreds of travel-related Zika cases in the United States, a disease spread primarily through mosquito bites. About 80 percent of people infected never show symptoms, and those who do generally suffer mild fever and joint pain. The biggest danger of the Zika virus lies in its ability to cause severe birth defects in developing fetuses, including a condition called microcephaly, in which the brain fails to develop fully. The virus is also linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, a nervous system illness that causes muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis.”

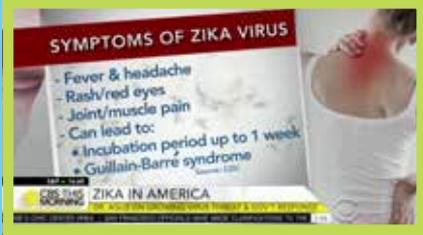
The Washington Post, June 30, 2016

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/06/30/americans-were-more-worried-about-ebola-than-they-are-about-zika/>

“Zika, a virus transmitted by mosquitoes or by sex with a person who has been infected by a mosquito, causes brain damage and neurological disorders in babies born to mothers who contracted it in pregnancy. It has spread throughout Latin America, causing hundreds of birth defects among largely poor populations that are ill-equipped to handle them.”

The New York Times, July 21, 2016

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/health/second-possible-zika-infection-is-found-in-florida.html>



CBS This Morning, May 25, 2016



The Washington Post, July 21, 2016

<http://wapo.st/23XDc54>

## Principle Two: Reinforce Credibility

Links or references to credible sources, especially CDC guidelines.

### EXAMPLES



*FOX News, June 21, 2016*

<http://video.foxnews.com/v/4967848383001/natural-ways-to-ward-off-zika/>

“The health organization’s guidance follows most of the current advice from public health authorities about [Zika](#), although its [recommendations for protecting against sexual transmission](#) of the virus differ slightly from [those of the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The W.H.O. statement said that travelers should use [condoms](#) or abstain from sex during their stay and for at least four weeks after returning from a region within the epidemic zone; the C.D.C. suggests abstaining for eight weeks after returning.”

*The New York Times, May 12, 2016*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/13/health/zika-brazil-olympics-who-guidelines.html>

“Put a helmet on that soldier. Zika can be transmitted sexually. So practice safe sex - or abstain - while traveling. “Use condoms correctly and consistently,” the World Health Organization [says](#), and continue to use them eight weeks after you get home.”

*National Public Radio, June 10, 2016*

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/06/10/480969498/so-youre-going-to-a-place-with-zika-heres-what-you-need-to-know>

“DEET is the gold standard for long-acting sprays. A repellent with about 20 percent DEET will last five hours. And the CDC [says](#) it’s safe for pregnant women.”

*National Public Radio, June 10, 2016*

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/06/10/480969498/so-youre-going-to-a-place-with-zika-heres-what-you-need-to-know>

Print sources should end articles with a link to CDC’s website (or another credible source on Zika).

Example: *For more information on Zika prevention, go to [www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/)*

# Principle Three: Visualize Prevention

All coverage of Zika should use images showing behaviors that prevent the spread of Zika.

## EXAMPLES



NBC Today, June 2, 2016



CBS Morning News, May 25, 2016



Consumer Reports, April 15, 2016

<http://www.consumerreports.org/pregnancy-childbirth/zika-and-pregnancy/>



NBC Today, June 17, 2016



ABC World News Now, May 4, 2016

# Specific Principles for Online/Broadcast/Print

## ONLINE

Include live links to guidelines

Bundle related Zika articles

Use interactive visuals and videos to increase memorability

Use question-and-answer format articles

## BROADCAST

Reinforce key information with print on screen

Use backdrop visuals to communicate key information about transmission and prevention

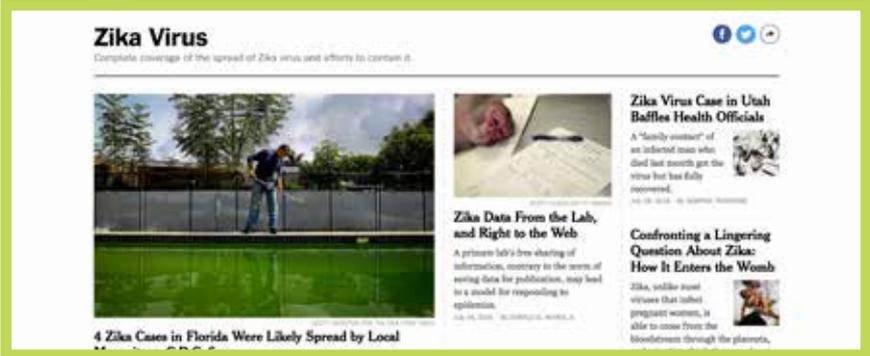
## PRINT

Write photo captions that underscore effects, transmission, prevention



# Online

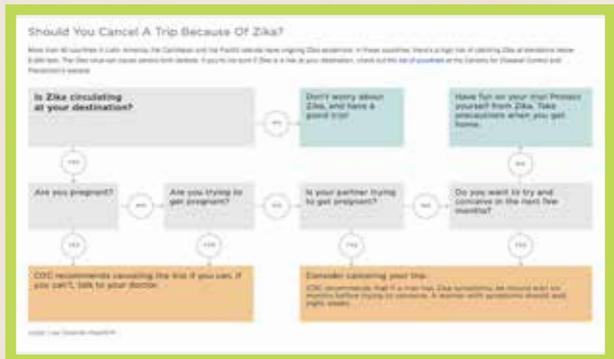
Online coverage should aggregate coverage of the Zika virus and do it prominently.



*The New York Times, July 26, 2016*

Example of New York Times' page on Zika that aggregates coverage.

<http://www.nytimes.com/news-event/zika-virus?8a>



*National Public Radio, June 10, 2016*

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/06/10/480969498/so-youre-going-to-a-place-with-zika-heres-what-you-need-to-know>

*The Washington Post, June 21, 2016*

Good example of an interactive graphic that could be linked to from other articles about Zika.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/health/zika-virus-risk-assessment/>

# Broadcast

Broadcasts should use print on screen to reinforce what the reporter is saying. Stock images of mosquitoes in petri dishes could be replaced with images of recommended modes of prevention.



NBC Today, July 6, 2016



MSNBC Live, June 17, 2016

Backdrop visuals. One displays text about prevention (EPA repellents and dumping standing water) in the background. The other has a visual of someone spraying mosquito repellent.



ABC Good Morning America, May 12, 2016

Text on the screen to reinforce consequential Zika information as the reporter is saying it.

# Print

Print coverage of Zika should maximize visuals by using captions to include information about prevention or transmission or other consequential information. If an image of a mosquito is used, it should be the correct species.



The New York Times, June 22, 2016

Photos show mosquito-control efforts and larvae.



St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 10, 2016

The image is of the correct mosquito and is captioned with species name.





The Annenberg Science Knowledge data here comes from a survey conducted August 4-8, 2016 via phone with 1,470 respondents. It has a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points.

[www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/ask/](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/ask/)