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
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.

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.
**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.

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.”

“The 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.”


CBS This Morning, June 10, 2016

CBS This Morning, May 25, 2016

http://wapo.st/23XDc54
Principle Two: Reinforce Credibility
Links or references to credible sources, especially CDC guidelines.

**EXAMPLES**

"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

“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

"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.”


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/
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*


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

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

National Public Radio, June 10, 2016

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

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.

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.

Photos show mosquito-control efforts and larvae.

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/