The Zika virus is spread to people when they are bitten by infected *Aedes* mosquitoes.

This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue and yellow fever and it bites during the morning and the late afternoon or evening.

Most people who are infected by the Zika virus have mild symptoms lasting from several days to a week. They are unlikely to know that they have Zika virus disease.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, headache and conjunctivitis (red eyes).

Zika virus diagnosis can only be confirmed by laboratory testing for the presence of Zika virus RNA in the blood or other body fluids, such as urine or saliva.

There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available for Zika virus disease. The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites. Research into rapid diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against the Zika virus are underway. In time a country’s population will build up sufficient herd immunity to block further spread of this virus.

The virus is known to circulate in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. In May 2015, there was a confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. The subsequent outbreak has been linked with reports of pregnant women giving birth to babies with birth defects such as microcephaly (abnormally small head and incomplete brain development).

Agencies investigating the Zika outbreaks are finding increasing evidence about the link between Zika virus and microcephaly. However, more investigation is needed to understand the relationship between microcephaly in babies and the Zika virus. Other potential causes are also being investigated.

The spread of the Zika virus in Brazil poses challenges for the Olympics and Paralympics, which are due to be held in Rio de Janeiro in August 2016.

The US and European health agencies recommend that any travelers who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should avoid travelling to areas with Zika viral disease outbreaks.

Further information can be found at: