

Study Suggests Zika Causes Blindness

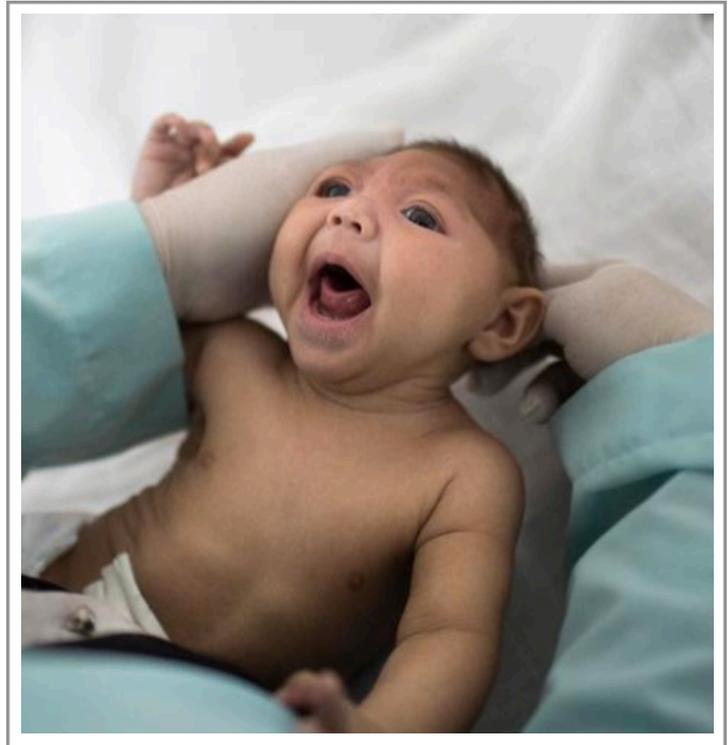
<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-05-25/study-suggests-zika-causes-blindness>

The latest findings suggest vision impairments are worse than previously thought.

By [Kimberly Leonard](#) | Staff Writer

May 25, 2016

A baby born with microcephaly is examined by a neurologist on Feb. 12, 2016, at the Pedro I hospital in Paraiba state, Brazil. Babies born with microcephaly caused by the Zika virus can suffer from worse eye problems than researchers thought, according to a new study. (FELIPE DANA/AP)



A study conducted in Brazil suggests that babies born with microcephaly caused by the Zika virus may develop eye problems that could lead to blindness.

The research, which comes from Stanford University and from Brazil, was published Wednesday in the journal *Ophthalmology*. It found that children can be at risk for bleeding of the retina and abnormal blood vessel development, resulting in blind spots or decreased peripheral vision or hemorrhaging that can result in vision loss.

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Another study in February had already found that babies born with Zika-related microcephaly have eye lesions and optic nerve abnormalities.

The latest study was limited in scope, involving only three Brazilian babies, but the findings were enough to have the American Academy of Ophthalmology update its clinical statement on Zika, adding the new symptoms observed.

Authors of the study note that they do not yet know whether Zika causes the eye abnormalities or whether they result from microcephaly, a condition in which babies are born with abnormally small heads. Babies who live in countries that don't have treatment available to them – like laser surgery or medicines – will be more likely to have vision problems or even to go blind.

Health officials have concluded that Zika, a virus spread by mosquitoes and through sex, is causing a surge of cases of microcephaly in Brazil. Still, they don't know how severe cases can be, including whether babies will have brain damage or have developmental disabilities, such as being unable to walk or talk.

Researchers have noticed that babies stricken with the defect as a result of the Zika virus have severe swallowing problems and difficulty contracting their joints.

Zika isn't the only virus that appears to cause blindness. Rubella, a virus that has striking similarities to Zika, can do the same, as can the Dengue virus, which is also spreading through mosquitoes in Latin America.
