
ZIKA VIRUS DISEASE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following information was provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and available on their website at the links provided [here](#) and [here](#).

About Zika Virus Disease:

What is Zika virus disease (Zika)?

Zika is a disease caused by Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that spread Chikungunya and dengue. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and they can also bite at night. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. We are studying how some mothers can pass the virus to their babies.

Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found and has not already been infected with Zika virus can get it from mosquito bites.

What countries have Zika?

Specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. If traveling, please visit [the CDC Travelers' Health site](#) for the most updated travel information.

What can people do to prevent becoming infected with Zika?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites. Here's how:

- *Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.*
- *Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.*
- *Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. All EPA-registered insect repellents are evaluated for safety and effectiveness.*
 - *Always follow the product label instructions.*
 - *Reapply insect repellent as directed.*

- Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
- If you have a baby or child:
 - Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age.
 - Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs, or
 - Cover crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting.
 - Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin.
 - Adults: Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated items.
 - Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last.
 - If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
 - Do **NOT** use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

What is the treatment for Zika?

There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat Zika virus infections.

Treat the symptoms:

- *Get plenty of rest.*
- *Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.*
- *Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain.*
- *Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.*
- *If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.*

How is Zika diagnosed?

- *See your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes). If you have recently traveled, tell your healthcare provider.*
- *Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika or other similar viral diseases like dengue or chikungunya.*

What should I do if I have Zika?

Treat the symptoms:

- *Get plenty of rest*
- *Drink fluids to prevent dehydration*
- *Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain*
- *Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs*

Protect others: During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another person through mosquito bites. An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people. To help prevent others from getting sick, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness.

See your healthcare provider if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes within 2 weeks after traveling to a place where Zika has been reported. Be sure to tell your health care provider where you traveled.

Is there a vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika?

No. There is no vaccine to prevent infection or medicine to treat Zika.

Are you immune for life once infected?

Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

Does Zika virus infection in pregnant women cause birth defects?

There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called [microcephaly](#) (a condition in which a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age) and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and these outcomes is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:

- Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
 - Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
 - If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant:
 - Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
 - Strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.

Does Zika virus infection cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder where a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes, paralysis. These symptoms can last a few weeks or several months. While most people fully recover from GBS, some people have permanent damage and in rare cases, people have died.

We do not know if Zika virus infection causes GBS. It is difficult to determine if any particular germ "causes" GBS. The Brazil Ministry of Health (MOH) is reporting an increased number of people affected with GBS. CDC is collaborating with the Brazil MOH to determine if having Zika makes it more likely you will get GBS.

Is this a new virus?

No. Outbreaks of Zika previously have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Zika virus likely will continue to spread to new areas. In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. Since that time, local transmission has been reported in many other countries and territories.

How many travel-associated cases have been diagnosed in the United States?

CDC continues to work with states to monitor the United States for mosquito-borne diseases, including Zika. As an arboviral disease, Zika is nationally notifiable. Healthcare providers are encouraged to report suspected cases to their state or local health departments to facilitate diagnosis and mitigate the risk of local transmission. To date, local vector-borne transmission of Zika virus has **not** been identified in the continental United States. Limited local transmission may occur in the mainland United States but it's unlikely that we will see widespread transmission of Zika in the mainland U.S.

Should we be concerned about Zika in the United States?

The U.S. mainland does have Aedes species mosquitoes that can become infected with and spread Zika virus. U.S. travelers who visit a country where Zika is found could become infected if bitten by a mosquito. With the recent outbreaks, the number of Zika virus disease cases among travelers visiting or returning to the United States will likely increase. These imported cases may result in local spread of the virus in some areas of the United States. CDC has been monitoring these epidemics and is prepared to address cases imported into the United States and cases transmitted locally.

What is CDC doing about Zika?

CDC has been aware of Zika for some time and has been preparing for its possible introduction into the United States. Laboratories in many countries have been trained to test for chikungunya and dengue. These skills have prepared these laboratories for Zika testing. CDC is working with international public health partners and with state health departments to

- *Alert healthcare providers and the public about Zika.*
- *Post travel notices and other travel-related guidance.*
- *Provide state health laboratories with diagnostic tests.*
- *Detect and report cases, which will help prevent further spread.*

The arrival of Zika in the Americas demonstrates the risks posed by this and other exotic viruses. CDC's health security plans are designed to effectively monitor for disease, equip diagnostic laboratories, and support mosquito control programs both in the United States and around the world.

Zika Virus Disease and Travel

What places have outbreaks of Zika?

Local transmission of Zika has been reported in many countries and territories. Specific areas where Zika is spreading are often difficult to determine and will likely change over time. Check CDC's Zika Travel Information webpage often for the most up-to-date travel recommendations.

Should pregnant women travel to places with Zika outbreaks?

Zika virus can be spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly in babies of mothers who had Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and birth defects is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women. Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

Should women trying to get pregnant travel to places with Zika outbreaks?

Until more is known, CDC recommends that women trying to get pregnant and their male partners talk to their healthcare provider before traveling to areas with Zika. Because sexual transmission is possible, both men and women should strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

Areas where Zika is spreading will likely change over time. Check CDC's travel website often for a current list of areas with Zika. Specific areas where Zika virus is spreading are often difficult to determine and are likely to change. As more information becomes available, travel notices will be updated. Please check back frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations.

Zika Virus Disease and Pregnancy

Can mothers pass Zika on to their babies during pregnancy?

Zika virus can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy. We are studying how some mothers can pass the virus to their babies.

What should a pregnant woman do if she has previously traveled to a place with a Zika outbreak?

Pregnant women who have recently traveled to an area with Zika should talk to a healthcare provider about their travel even if they don't feel sick. CDC has guidance to help doctors decide what tests are needed for pregnant women who may have been exposed to Zika and what tests are needed for unborn babies. CDC recommends that all pregnant women who have traveled to an area with Zika talk to their doctors. It is especially important that pregnant women see a doctor if they develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes during their trip or within 2 weeks after traveling to a country where Zika has been reported. They should tell the doctor where they traveled.

What should a pregnant woman do if she gets sick during or after travel to a place with a Zika outbreak?

Pregnant women who are worried that they had Zika should talk to their healthcare provider and tell their provider about their recent travel. It is especially important for a pregnant woman to see a doctor if she develops a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes during her trip or within 2 weeks after traveling to an area with Zika. CDC has guidance to help doctors decide what tests are needed for pregnant women who may have been exposed to Zika and what tests are needed for unborn babies.

Information for healthcare providers can be found on the Zika virus [Information for Health Care Providers](#) webpage.

Does Zika in pregnant women cause birth defects?

Brazil has been having a significant outbreak of Zika virus since May 2015. Officials in Brazil have also noted an increase in the number of babies with congenital microcephaly (a birth defect in which the size of a baby's head is smaller than expected for age and sex) during that time. Congenital microcephaly is often a sign of the brain not developing normally during pregnancy. Health authorities in Brazil, with assistance from the Pan American Health Organization, CDC, and other agencies, have been investigating the possible association between Zika virus infection and microcephaly.

Additional studies are needed to determine the degree to which Zika might be linked with microcephaly. More lab testing and other studies are planned to learn more about the risks of Zika virus infection during pregnancy.

Because of the possible association between Zika infection and microcephaly, pregnant women should take steps to prevent mosquito bites.

Effects of Zika on Future Pregnancies

Can a previous Zika infection cause a woman who later gets pregnant to have a baby with microcephaly?

Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that Zika virus infection poses a risk of birth defects for future pregnancies. Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for about a week. The virus will not cause birth defects in a baby that is conceived after the virus is cleared from the blood.

Is it safe to get pregnant after traveling to a place with a Zika outbreak?

Women thinking about getting pregnant who have recently traveled to an area with Zika should talk to their healthcare provider. Once a person becomes sick, Zika virus usually remains in the blood for about

a week. Zika virus has been found in semen for up to two weeks. There is no evidence that the virus will cause birth defects in a baby that is conceived after the virus is cleared from the semen of the father and from the blood of the mother.

Prevention

Is there a vaccine or medicine for Zika?

No. There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika.

How can people protect themselves against Zika?

The best way to prevent Zika is to prevent mosquito bites. Here's how...

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered insect repellents](#) (bug spray). Always follow the instructions on the label and reapply every few hours.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites, like containers with standing water.

Visit CDC's website for more information about [preventing mosquito bites](#).

Can pregnant and breastfeeding women use insect repellent?

Yes. Use EPA-registered insect repellents. When used as directed, these insect repellents are proven safe and effective even for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Some natural products are EPA-registered. The effectiveness of non-EPA registered insect repellents is NOT known. Insect repellents registered by the EPA can be expected to repel the mosquitoes that spread Zika, provided the EPA-approved labeling says the product is for use to protect against mosquitoes in general or against Aedes mosquitoes in particular. An example of a natural product with an EPA registration is oil of lemon eucalyptus.

Testing

Should a pregnant woman who lives in or has traveled to a place with a Zika outbreak be tested for the virus?

CDC has guidance to help healthcare providers decide what tests are needed for pregnant women who may have been exposed to Zika and what tests are needed for unborn babies. CDC recommends that all pregnant women who have traveled to a place with a Zika outbreak get tested. It is especially important for pregnant women to see a doctor if they develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes during their trip or within 2 weeks after traveling to an area with Zika. Be sure to tell your doctor where you traveled.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/disease-qa.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/question-answers.html>