

Zika Virus Information Sheet

What is Zika virus?

Zika (pronounced *Zee-kuh*) is primarily a mosquito-borne disease caused by a virus spread by *Aedes aegypti*, the same mosquitoes that spread [dengue](#) and [chikungunya](#) viruses.

How can you catch Zika virus?

Humans primarily become infected with Zika virus through bites from infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. Spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual transmission have been reported. As of 1/15/16, CDC has issued a [travel alert](#) for those areas where Zika virus transmission is widely circulating, primarily throughout Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

Why is Zika a concern for pregnant women?

Maternal-fetal transmission of Zika virus has been [documented](#) throughout pregnancy. A severe birth defect called microcephaly, which leads to abnormal brain development, has been associated with babies born to mothers who were infected with Zika while pregnant.

Due to the limited information known about the risk of sexual transmission of Zika, the CDC has [advised pregnant women](#) with a male sexual partner who has traveled to, or lives in, an area affected by active Zika virus transmission to avoid sex or use condoms during sex until the pregnancy is over.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus?

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus become ill. Symptoms usually begin 3-7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito, with most patients feeling better within a few days to a week.

Common symptoms include the following:

- Fever
- Red eyes
- Joint pain
- Rash
- Headache
- Muscle pain

How can you be treated for Zika virus?

There is no specific medicine or vaccine available to treat or prevent Zika virus infections; however supportive treatment for symptoms is possible. Consult your healthcare provider for specific recommendations.

How can you prevent Zika virus?

If you live in or travel to areas with Zika virus, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid mosquito bites. You can reduce the chance of mosquito bites by:

- Using insect repellents containing DEET, Picaridan, or other EPA registered repellants according to the product label on exposed skin and clothing.
- Wearing long sleeves and pants.
- Using air conditioning and screens in homes or hotels to keep mosquitoes out.
- Draining and removing containers that hold water from around your home where mosquitoes can breed such as plastic covers, buckets, old tires, plant trays, pet bowls, toys, boats, etc.

Those who have traveled to an area where Zika virus is circulating should avoid being bitten by mosquitoes for at least 7 days upon their return to prevent further mosquito bites and spread of the virus, regardless of whether they have symptoms. For more information on Zika virus, go to www.wearepublichealth.org.