



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE

Zika Virus Infection

Zika is a viral infection primarily spread by mosquito bites from infected *Aedes* species (primarily *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*). Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause microcephaly and other serious birth defects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified nearly 100 countries and territories as areas with Zika risk. At the height of the Zika epidemic in the Americas in 2016, local mosquito-borne transmission of Zika was reported in areas of Florida and Texas. According to the CDC in 2017, most of the 5,000 plus travel-associated Zika cases in the U.S. were from travelers coming from the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Central and South America. As of the date of this publication, no local transmission has been reported in the continental United States since 2017.

How do you become infected?

The virus is spread by:

- A bite from an infected mosquito (primary method of transmission)
- A mother to her fetus during pregnancy
- Sex with a man or woman who has Zika
- Blood transfusions

What is your risk of becoming infected?

Navy and Marine Corps personnel, and their families, may become infected during travel to or while living in an area where Zika virus is found. For international travel destinations, CDC Zika Travel Notices (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>) provide up-to-date information on Zika risk and recommended precautions. Sexual partners of Zika-infected individuals also are at risk.

What are the typical symptoms?

- Fever
- Conjunctivitis (red eyes)
- Muscle and joint pain
- Rash
- Headache

Most people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. One in five people infected will develop mild symptoms lasting several days to a week. Most infected individuals do not require hospitalization and death associated with infection is rare. If symptoms occur, they typically appear two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito or having unprotected sex with an infected person.

What are the health effects associated with Zika?

Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause damage to the fetal brain, microcephaly and other birth defects. Infection has been linked to miscarriage, stillbirth and Guillain-Barré syndrome, an uncommon illness of the nervous system in both children and adults.

How can you prevent infection if you live in or travel to Zika virus areas?

Currently, no vaccine or drug is available to prevent Zika virus infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid mosquito bites (both day and night) while in areas with Zika risk, and avoid unprotected sex with a person who may have been exposed to Zika.

Note: The CDC recommends pregnant women not travel to areas with an outbreak occurring. It is also recommended that pregnant women, or women planning on becoming pregnant in the near future, talk to a health care provider about potential risks when traveling to locations where current or past transmission is or has happened but no outbreak is occurring. If a pregnant woman decides to travel to an area with endemic Zika virus transmission, she should strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites and sexual exposure during the trip. Pregnant couples in which one or both partners live in or traveled to an area with risk of Zika should use condoms from start to finish every time they have sex or not have sex during the pregnancy. Men with a partner planning pregnancy that travels to an outbreak area or an area with elevated risk of transmission should take precautions in preventing mosquito bites during and after travel. He should use condoms or not have sex for at least three months after return (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>) .

The following steps are recommended if you live in or travel to an area with active Zika virus transmission:

- Choose a hotel or lodging with air conditioning or with screens on windows and doors.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are outside or in a room that is not well screened.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, 2-undecanone or IR3535. These repellents are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women when used as directed.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and equipment.
- Avoid unprotected sex with potentially exposed partners.
- Use condoms the right way, every time you have sex.

What should you do if you suspect you have been infected?

If you develop fever, rash, headache, muscle or joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes) within two weeks of travelling to an area with risk of Zika, or within two weeks of unprotected sex with a potentially-exposed person, see your healthcare provider immediately. Report your symptoms, recent travel and history of sexual partners. Your provider will coordinate testing for Zika virus as appropriate and help manage your symptoms. Because Zika virus is often transmitted in the same geographic areas as dengue fever, you should avoid taking aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) until

dengue infection can be ruled out, to reduce the risk of bleeding. You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to reduce fever and pain. Finally, take strict steps to avoid mosquito bites during the first week after symptoms begin to avoid further spread of Zika virus.

Zika Virus Resources

- **CDC Information Hotline:**
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)
- **Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Zika Virus Information:**
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/program-and-policy-support/Pages/Zika-virus.aspx>
- **CDC Zika Virus Webpage:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>
- **CDC Zika Travel Notices:**
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>
- **CDC Zika Virus Infection and Pregnancy:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/index.html>
- **Zika and Sexual Transmission:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/sexual-transmission.html>
- **Pregnant? Read This Before You Travel:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/zika/protect-yourself.html>
- **Mosquito Bite Prevention for Travelers:**
http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/pdfs/fs_mosquito_bite_prevention_travelers.pdf