



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS FORCE HEALTH PROTECTION COMMAND IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

ZIKA VIRUS INFECTION

Zika is a viral infection primarily spread by bites from infected *Aedes* mosquitos. Zika can also be transmitted through sex. While Zika virus disease has no symptoms 80% of the time and symptoms are almost always mild, Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a collection of serious birth defects known as Congenital Zika Syndrome. Microcephaly (abnormally small head) is the most characteristic finding of Congenital Zika Syndrome. Global cases of Zika have declined markedly since 2017, but evidence of viral circulation continues in Latin America, India, Southeast Asia, and Africa. There have been no confirmed Zika cases reported in the U.S. or its territories since 2019.

How do you become infected?

The virus is spread by:

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

What is your risk of becoming infected?

Navy and Marine Corps personnel and their families may become infected while living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is present. Sexual partners of travelers with Zika are also at risk. CDC maintains current information on geographic Zika risk and recommended precautions at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

What are the typical symptoms?

Most people infected with Zika virus have no symptoms. One in five people infected will develop mild symptoms such as fever, muscles or joint pain, headache, rash and red eyes lasting several days to a week before resolving without treatment. Zika-related hospitalizations and death are very 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.

How do I prevent Zika infection?

Currently, no vaccine or drug is available to prevent Zika virus infection. The best ways to prevent infection are to avoid mosquito bites while in areas with Zika risk, and to avoid unprotected sex with a person who has traveled to an area with Zika risk.

Mosquito bite avoidance in areas with Zika 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.
- Treat clothing with permethrin prior to travel and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to provide a physical barrier to bites.
- 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.

Avoiding sexual transmission of Zika:

- Avoid unprotected sex or use condoms carefully and correctly during and after travel to areas with Zika transmission.
- Men can transmit Zika through sex for up to 3 months after exposure, and women can transmit for up to 2 months.

Pregnancy

- Pregnant women or those who plan to be pregnant are strongly advised to avoid travel to areas with active or recent Zika transmission.
- Male travelers to Zika risk areas with a pregnant partner should use condoms or avoid sex for the remainder of the pregnancy.
- CDC has more information about Zika in pregnancy at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/zika#aftertraveltoredorpurpleareasonthemaprotectothers>

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

If you traveled to an area with Zika transmission in the last 2 weeks or had unprotected sex with someone who recently traveled to an area with active Zika and have symptoms concerning for Zika (see above), see your healthcare provider. Report your symptoms, recent travel and history of sexual partners. Your provider will coordinate Zika testing if appropriate. Because Zika virus is often transmitted in the same geographic areas as dengue fever, avoid taking aspirin, ibuprofen or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) until dengue infection can be ruled out. You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol) to reduce fever and pain if needed. Finally, to prevent further spread of Zika virus, take strict steps to avoid mosquito bites and unprotected sex until test results can clarify your condition.

Zika Virus Resources

- 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>
<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/sexual-transmission.html>