



# Zika Virus

## How is Zika virus spread?

Zika is mostly spread through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. 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.

**There have been no cases of Zika Virus confirmed in Bermuda.** The greatest threat of importing Zika virus to Bermuda comes from travel to areas where mosquitoes carrying the virus are present.

Zika can also be spread from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

There is also a risk of getting Zika virus infection through any form of sexual contact with a person who has Zika, even if the infected person does not have symptoms at the time.

There have been reports of people getting Zika infection from blood transfusions in Brazil. These reports are currently being investigated.

## Do we have the *Aedes* mosquito in Bermuda?

The *Aedes Albopictus* mosquito is in Bermuda and may be able to spread the Zika Virus if it bites a person infected with the virus. They live indoors and outdoors near people. They are aggressive daytime biters, but can also bite at night.

## Who gets Zika Virus?

Anyone who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk for infection.

## What countries have ongoing transmission of Zika virus?

Outbreaks are occurring in many countries in the Americas region.

Specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are likely to change over time. Please visit the **CDC Travelers' Health** site for the most updated travel information.

## What can travelers do to prevent getting Zika?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika Virus. Travelers to Zika affected countries can protect themselves while in the country by:

- 1) Preventing mosquito bites:
  - Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
  - Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535. Always use as directed. Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use all EPA-registered insect repellents.
  - Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself.
  - Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms. Use bed nets if required
- 2) Using safer sexual practices including correct and consistent use of condoms.

## What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

Most people have no symptoms and might not realize that they have been infected. For people who get symptoms, the illness is usually mild.

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

## What should I do if I develop symptoms of Zika?

- See your healthcare provider if you had or develop symptoms (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes) during or after your trip. Tell your healthcare provider if you have recently traveled.
- Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika or other similar viral diseases like dengue or chikungunya.
- Treat the symptoms:
  - Get plenty of rest
  - Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
  - Take medicines only as directed by your healthcare provider.

## Can I be tested for Zika Virus even if I don't have symptoms?

Currently, in Bermuda, testing for returning travelers from one of the affected countries is available for persons that have signs and symptoms of Zika virus infection.

These tests were made for use on persons who have recovered from, or are unwell with Zika virus infection and may not be reliable for persons without symptoms.

### How can I protect others when I return from a country where there is Zika Virus?

Zika virus can be passed from an infected person to another mosquito 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.**

Because the illness is usually mild and many people will not have symptoms at all, travelers might not realize that they have been infected. Therefore, **even if you do not feel sick**, persons returning to Bermuda from an area affected by Zika should **continue to take steps to prevent mosquito bites on return for at least 3 weeks**.

It may be possible for a person with Zika infection to give it to his/her partner(s) through sex, even when he/she does not have symptoms, or know that he/she is infected. If a person's sexual partner has traveled to a Zika-affected country, the couple should use a condom or dental dam correctly for all forms of sexual contact or not have sex, to prevent getting Zika through sex. Pregnant women should use condoms or not have sex for the rest of the pregnancy. The recommended period of time for taking these precautions will depend on the couple's situation. To find out more information:

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

If you are a blood donor, inform the Blood Donor Centre of your recent travel before donation. Your blood donation may be postponed.

Take steps to reduce mosquito breeding on your property. Mosquitoes can breed in the smallest amount of water so ensure that any object that can collect water is emptied around your property.

### How will Zika Virus affect a pregnant woman or her unborn baby?

A serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly (abnormal smallness of the head) and other poor pregnancy outcomes have been reported in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant.

Special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant include:

- Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy should consider avoiding travel to the areas where Zika virus is spreading. Pregnant women who must travel to one of these areas should talk to their healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip.
- Women trying to become pregnant should check with their healthcare provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.
- Pregnant women who travel to areas where Zika virus is spreading should mention this during their pregnancy check-ups.

### Does Zika Virus Infection cause other problems?

An association between Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) and Zika has been reported. GBS is an uncommon sickness of the nervous system 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.

Consult a doctor immediately if you develop symptoms of GBS (weakness of the arms and legs), especially after travel to a Zika affected country.

### What is Bermuda doing to prevent transmission of Zika?

Suspected and confirmed cases of Zika are reportable to the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU), who will investigate and put control measures in place to prevent ongoing spread. The ESU also routinely monitors for increases in reported syndromes such as "Fever and Rash", as an early warning sign for mosquito-borne diseases such as Zika. Any increase in reports of symptoms suggestive of Zika would be investigated to determine the cause.

The Vector Control Section of the Environmental Health Department monitors the mosquito population and get rid of mosquito breeding sites.

Ongoing monitoring for ill travelers continues at the LF Wade International Airport with the assistance of Customs and Immigration.

Adapted from:

"Zika virus." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016  
<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/about/index.html>

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