



Indiana State  
Department of Health  
Epidemiology Resource Center

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Zika Virus

#### General Information

##### What is Zika virus?

Zika virus is a tropical infection that is spread to people primarily through the bite of infected mosquitoes.

##### How is Zika virus transmitted?

Zika virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected yellow fever mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti*) or Asian tiger mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*). Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person who is already infected with the virus. The infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites. The virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Sexual transmission of the virus has been documented in a small number of cases.

##### Where is Zika virus found?

Since May 2015, an outbreak of Zika virus infection has been occurring in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Outbreaks have previously occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Zika virus is NOT currently being transmitted by mosquitoes in the continental United States, but cases have been reported in travelers returning from areas affected by the outbreak.

A list of Zika virus travel notices can be found on CDC's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

## **Who is at risk for Zika virus?**

Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found can get it from mosquito bites. There have been a small number of reported cases of sexual transmission; however, the majority of infections are transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

## **Could an outbreak of Zika virus infection occur in Indiana?**

The risk of a Zika virus outbreak occurring in Indiana is currently thought to be low. Indiana does not have year-round mosquito activity due to the temperate climate, and the most important mosquito vector for Zika virus (*Aedes aegypti*) is not present in Indiana. Although the other mosquito vector, *Aedes albopictus*, is present in some areas of Indiana, that mosquito does not transmit Zika virus nearly as well. Furthermore, the conditions of housing and sanitation in the United States are less favorable for spread of the virus than in some parts of the world where the outbreak is occurring.

The ISDH is carefully monitoring the spread of the virus, and we will immediately notify the public if we believe that the risk of an outbreak is increasing.

## **Symptoms**

### **What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?**

The most common symptoms of Zika virus infection are

- Fever
- Rash
- Joint pain
- Conjunctivitis (pink-eye)

Most people infected with Zika virus do not develop any symptoms at all. About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus become sick. The sickness is usually mild, with symptoms lasting several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon and deaths are rare.

## **Diagnosis**

### **How is Zika virus infection diagnosed and should I be tested?**

See your healthcare provider if you develop symptoms (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes) and you were exposed to Zika virus within the 2 weeks prior to your illness.

Your healthcare provider may order specialized blood tests to diagnose Zika or other similar viral diseases.

## **Treatment**

### **What should I do if I have Zika virus infection?**

There is currently no vaccine or antiviral medication used to treat Zika virus infection. Treatment focuses on relieving the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- If you need to take medicine to reduce fever or pain, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol™). Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. Advil™, Motrin™, Naprosyn™).

## **Pregnant women**

### **What is the risk for women during pregnancy?**

Zika virus can be passed from a mother to her fetus during pregnancy. To date, there are no reports of babies getting Zika through breastfeeding. Unborn babies infected with Zika virus can develop microcephaly, a condition that results in a small head size and undeveloped brain. More information about microcephaly can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/microcephaly.html>.

### **What do I do if I am pregnant and have traveled to a country where Zika infection is occurring?**

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. It is especially important to see a doctor if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain or red eyes during your trip or within 2 weeks after traveling to a country where Zika has been reported. Be sure to tell your doctor where you traveled. Your doctor can help you decide whether you should be tested for Zika virus or other travel-related infections.

### **Can Zika virus be spread through sex?**

There is evidence that the Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a man who has been infected to his sexual partners. The Zika virus is present in semen longer than in blood, but it is not currently known how long the virus remains in the semen of men who have had Zika. To date, there are no reports of women with Zika virus infection transmitting the virus to their sex partners. The Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is studying Zika virus transmission to answer these questions.

**If a man traveled to or lives in an area with Zika, is it safe for him to have sex with his pregnant partner?**

The CDC recommends that men who have lived in or traveled to an area with Zika virus transmission should either abstain from sex or use condoms for the duration of their partners' pregnancies. Additionally, the CDC recommends that pregnant women talk with their healthcare providers if their male partners have been exposed to Zika virus during travel and have symptoms of Zika-like illness.

Men with partners who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant in the immediate future should take steps to prevent mosquito bites while living or traveling in an area with active Zika virus transmission.

**If a male traveled to or lives in an area with Zika virus and his female sex partner is trying to get pregnant or is thinking about getting pregnant, how long do they need to wait before trying to get pregnant?**

The CDC does not know how long the Zika virus is present in semen for men who have been infected with Zika virus. However, there is currently no evidence that harm would come to the baby if the father is infected with Zika virus at the time of the baby's conception. Harmful effects would occur if a woman is infected during pregnancy. The CDC is currently studying this question and will issue guidance when more information is available.

**Should sexually active people be concerned about getting Zika virus from their male sex partners? What if their travel history is unknown?**

The most reliable ways to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted infections are to abstain from sexual activity, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. Consistent and correct use of condoms reduces the risk of many sexually transmitted infections, not just Zika virus.

People whose male sex partners have traveled to or live in an area with active Zika transmission, or whose travel history is unknown, should consider using condoms to reduce the risk of Zika virus transmission.

## Prevention

### How is Zika virus prevented?

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

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to reduce exposed skin.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that have intact window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If these accommodations are not available, sleep under a mosquito net.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. When used as directed, these insect repellents are proven safe and effective for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
  - Examples of EPA-registered repellents include products containing DEET, picaridin, IR-3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
  - Follow the product label instructions and reapply as directed.
  - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated items.
  - If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
  - Do NOT use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.

## Travel

### If I am traveling to a place with Zika virus, should I be concerned about the transmission of Zika?

Travelers who go to places with outbreaks of Zika are at risk of being infected with Zika virus. Mosquitoes that spread Zika are aggressive daytime biters, live indoors and outdoors, and prefer to bite people. They can also bite at night. The best way to avoid Zika virus infection is to prevent mosquito bites during travel.

For a list of countries affected by Zika virus, visit this website:  
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

ISDH's recommendations for travelers may be found at  
<http://in.gov/isdh/26910.htm>.