

CDC Zika Virus: Questions and Answers

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Background Information

What is Zika virus disease (Zika)?

Zika is a disease caused by Zika virus that is spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

Is this a new virus?

No. Outbreaks of Zika previously have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Zika virus likely will continue to spread to new areas. In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. Since that time, local transmission has been reported in many other countries and territories.

What countries have Zika?

Specific [areas where Zika virus transmission](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>) is ongoing are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. If traveling, please visit [the CDC Travelers' Health site](#) for the most updated travel information.

Symptoms and Transmission

What are the symptoms of Zika?

About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected.

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

How is Zika transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that spread Chikungunya and dengue. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and they can also bite

at night. 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. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

Prevention and Treatment

Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where Zika virus is found and has not already been infected with Zika virus can get it from mosquito bites.

What can people do to prevent becoming infected with Zika?

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

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered](#) insect repellents. All EPA-registered insect repellents are evaluated for safety and effectiveness.
 - Always follow the product label instructions.
 - Reapply insect repellent as directed.
 - Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
 - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
- If you have a baby or child:
 - Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age.
 - Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs, or
 - Cover crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting.
 - Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin.
 - Adults: Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated items.
 - Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last.
 - If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
 - Do **NOT** use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.

- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

What is the treatment for Zika?

There is no vaccine or specific medicine to treat Zika virus infections.

Treat the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain.
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.

What should I do if I have Zika?

Treat the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
- Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain
- Do not take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

[Protect others\(<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>\)](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html): During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another person 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.

See your healthcare provider if you are pregnant and develop a fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes within 2 weeks after traveling to a place where Zika has been reported. Be sure to tell your health care provider where you traveled.

Is there a vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika?

No. There is no vaccine to prevent infection or medicine to treat Zika.

Are you immune for life once infected?

Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

Potential risks associated with Zika

Does Zika virus infection in pregnant women cause birth defects?

There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called [microcephaly](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/microcephaly.html) (a condition in which a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age) and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Knowledge of the link between Zika and these outcomes is evolving, but until more is known, CDC recommends special precautions for the following groups:

- Women who are pregnant (in any trimester):
 - Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
 - If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant:
 - Before you travel, talk to your doctor about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection.
 - Strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) during your trip.

For more questions and answers on Zika and pregnancy, see [Questions and Answers: Zika and Pregnancy](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/question-answers.html).

Does Zika virus infection cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder 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.

We do not know if Zika virus infection causes GBS. It is difficult to determine if any particular germ "causes" GBS. The Brazil Ministry of Health (MOH) is reporting an increased number of people affected with GBS. CDC is collaborating with the Brazil MOH to determine if having Zika makes it more likely you will get GBS.

Zika in the U.S.

How many travel-associated cases have been diagnosed in the United States?

CDC continues to work with states to monitor the United States for mosquito-borne diseases, including Zika. As an arboviral disease, Zika is nationally notifiable. Healthcare providers are encouraged to report suspected cases to their state or local health departments to facilitate diagnosis and mitigate the risk of local transmission. To date, local vector-borne transmission of Zika virus has **not** been identified in the continental United States. Limited local transmission may occur in the mainland United States but it's unlikely that we will see widespread transmission of Zika in the mainland U.S.

Should we be concerned about Zika in the United States?

The U.S. mainland does have *Aedes* species mosquitoes that can become infected with and spread Zika virus. U.S. travelers who visit a country where Zika is found could become infected if bitten by a mosquito.

With the recent outbreaks, the number of Zika virus disease cases among travelers visiting or returning to the United States will likely increase. These imported cases may result in local spread of the virus in some areas of the United States. CDC has been monitoring these epidemics and is prepared to address cases imported into the United States and cases transmitted locally.

What is CDC doing about Zika?

CDC has been aware of Zika for some time and has been preparing for its possible introduction into the United States. Laboratories in many countries have been trained to test for chikungunya and dengue.

These skills have prepared these laboratories for Zika testing.

CDC is working with international public health partners and with state health departments to:

- Alert healthcare providers and the public about Zika.
- Post travel notices and other travel-related guidance.
- Provide state health laboratories with diagnostic tests.
- Detect and report cases, which will help prevent further spread.

The arrival of Zika in the Americas demonstrates the risks posed by this and other exotic viruses. CDC's health security plans are designed to effectively monitor for disease, equip diagnostic laboratories, and support mosquito control programs both in the United States and around the world.

Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#), and the [Division of Vector-Borne Diseases \(DVBD\)](#)