

Zika Virus

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What is Zika virus?

Zika virus is an infection transmitted by the bite of an *Aedes* mosquito. *Aedes* mosquitoes typically bite between dawn and dusk.

It can take between 3 and 12 days for symptoms to develop. Most people infected have minimal symptoms or no symptoms. For those with symptoms Zika virus generally causes a mild short-lived illness (2-7 days). When symptoms are present they may include fever, rash, itching, muscle and joint pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes), headache. The infection is usually self-limiting with supportive care (rest and fluids)

Complications.

Serious complications and deaths are rare however ZIKV is a cause of congenital zika syndrome (microcephaly and other congenital anomalies) and neurological complications such as Guillen-Barre syndrome.

Pregnancy.

Zika virus has an association with birth defects such as microcephaly (babies with small heads and problems with brain development).

If you become infected with the Zika virus whilst pregnant, the infection may be transmitted to the baby.

Pregnant women are advised to postpone non-essential travel to all areas with current active Zika virus transmission. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/zika-virus-zikv-clinical-and-travel-guidance#zika-and-pregnancy>

Women should avoid becoming pregnant while travelling to a country or area with risk of Zika virus transmission.

On return to the UK, they should avoid becoming pregnant for a further 2 months if only the women travelled, and for 3 months if both partners or just male partner travelled.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/zika-virus-advice-for-women-returning-from-areas-with-active-zika-virus-transmission>

Sexual Transmission.

Transmission of the virus through sexual intercourse is known to occur.

Irrespective of whether they have had symptoms of Zika infection, male partners who have travelled to Zika affected areas should use condoms for **3 months** after the date of leaving an area with risk for Zika virus transmission, or 3 months since the last unprotected sexual contact with a potentially infectious partner took place, to avoid transmission to their partner.

If a female partner is pregnant, condom use is advised for the duration of the pregnancy.

Up to date country specific information about Zika virus transmission where you are travelling can be found at: <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-information/>

Travellers with co-morbidities, immuno-suppression or at extremes of age.

Consider whether travel to a country or area with risk for Zika virus transmission is necessary. After considering the risks, if you plan to travel to a risk country, then you should adopt scrupulous anti-bite measures. More information on ZIKV infection and immuno-suppression is available from Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-and-immunocompromised-patients>

Prevention of Zika virus infection.

Mosquito bite prevention measures both during the day and night time hours especially during mid-morning and late afternoon to dusk, when the mosquito that transmits Zika virus is most active. There is currently no vaccination or specific treatment for Zika virus.

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