

Zika

Controlling the Risk

Key facts

- Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted by *Aedes* mosquito.
- People with Zika virus disease usually have a mild fever, skin rash (exanthema) and conjunctivitis. These symptoms normally last for 2-7 days.
- At present, there is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available. Best prevention is protection against mosquito bites.
- Transmission of the virus is ongoing in Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- FH recommends that all pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

How do people become infected by Zika?

Zika virus is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito from the *Aedes* genus, mainly *Aedes aegypti* in tropical regions. This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. The *Aedes* mosquito aggressively bites during the morning and late afternoon/evening hours.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

The time from exposure to symptoms is likely to be a few days. The symptoms include: fever, skin rashes and itching, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise and headache. For the majority of those infected, the symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days. However for others, there could be neurological syndromes. Some people infected with Zika may not have symptoms.

Pregnancy: There is increasing evidence of a causal relationship between Zika infection during pregnancy and babies born with microcephaly and other congenital malformations.



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The virus is spread mainly by the bites of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. These mosquito types are characterized by white stripes on their black bodies and legs.

In line with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), FH strongly recommends the following:

Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

Women trying to become pregnant or who are thinking about becoming pregnant, should consult with their healthcare provider before and after traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

For additional information on pregnancy and Zika, please see the links on the last page.

How can I prevent infection?

There is neither a vaccine nor prophylactic medications available to prevent Zika virus infection. The most important protective measures are the control of mosquito populations and the prevention of mosquito bites in at-risk individuals, especially pregnant women, the elderly and children.

How is Zika treated?

Zika virus disease is usually relatively mild. People sick with Zika virus should get plenty of rest, drink enough fluids, and treat pain and fever with common medicines. If symptoms worsen, they should seek medical care and advice. Pregnant women who feel they may have been exposed to Zika virus may wish to consult with their health-care providers for close monitoring of their pregnancies.

Your Responsibility

Precautions to avoid mosquito bites should be taken when staying in risk areas. All visitors are required to:

- Wear proper clothing to minimize skin exposure to day-biting mosquitoes (such as long-sleeved shirts, long trousers/pants, socks and closed toe shoes).
- Wear mosquito repellent with a high percentage of active ingredients.
- Sleep under the bed net provided by Food for the Hungry. If you have not used a bed net in the past, ask a staff member how to properly fit the net on your bed.

While not required, the following measures are also encouraged:

- Utilize mosquito coils and other devices that deter mosquitoes.
- Wear permethrin treated clothing (do not apply permethrin directly to skin).
- When possible, set the air-conditioning to a low temperature at night - mosquitoes do not like cold temperatures.
- When possible, use a fan.

Choosing an insect repellent

An appropriate insect repellent contains one of the following active ingredients:

- DEET Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin);
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE); or
- PMD IR3535 (Avon Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection.

For children, pregnant women, or anyone with health concerns, please consult with your doctor before using DEET.

What should I do if I suspect that I have Zika?

- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you develop a fever with a rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Tell him or her about your travel.
- Take medicine, such as acetaminophen or paracetamol, to relieve fever and pain. Do not take aspirin, products containing aspirin, or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen.
- Get lots of rest and drink plenty of liquids.
- Prevent additional mosquito bites to avoid spreading the disease.

If you are pregnant:

All pregnant travelers returning from areas with ongoing Zika transmission should be tested for Zika virus infection. This includes both pregnant women with symptoms of Zika and pregnant women with no symptoms.

- If you do not have symptoms of illness, visit your doctor between 2 and 12 weeks after you return from travel for testing.
- If you develop a fever with a rash, joint pain, or red eyes, talk to your doctor or nurse immediately and tell him or her about your travel.

For additional information, please visit:

www.cdc.gov/zika
www.who.int/en
www.paho.org