



Frequently Asked Questions: Zika Virus

1. What is Zika virus?

Zika fever is a mild illness caused by a mosquito-borne virus similar to those that cause dengue and chikungunya virus infection. It has been identified in several countries in Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean since 2015. Outbreaks have previously been reported in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Local transmission has been reported in Puerto Rico and in a small area in Miami-Dade County. Zika virus is not transmitted person-to-person.

2. How is Zika virus transmitted?

Zika virus is primarily transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, including the same mosquitoes that can transmit dengue and chikungunya. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. It is unknown how often this occurs or what stage of pregnancy is most at risk. There are no reports of infants getting Zika virus through breastfeeding. In addition, Zika virus can be present in semen and transmitted through sexual activity.

3. Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where Zika virus is found who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk for infection, including pregnant women.

4. What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

Only about 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus are symptomatic. Zika fever is a mild illness. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. Signs and symptoms of Zika virus may include: acute onset of low-grade fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis (reddening of eye), body aches, headache, eye pain and vomiting.

5. How soon do infected people get sick?

People typically develop symptoms between 2 and 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito. Zika fever is a mild illness with only 1 out of 5 cases known to show symptoms. Severe cases of the disease is uncommon.

6. What treatment options are available for Zika virus illness?

Since there is no specific treatment against the virus, treat the symptoms by getting plenty of rest, drink fluids to prevent dehydration, take medicines to relieve fever and pain. Illness typically resolves within a week.

7. What should I do if I think I have Zika fever?

If you feel that you might have Zika fever, please visit your health care provider. A health care provider will determine if the patient is exhibiting symptoms of Zika virus and discuss the patient's travel history.

If appropriate, based on the guidance from the CDC, the health care provider will order a specialized blood test or urine test. All testing has to be ordered by a health care provider, in communication with their department of health and CDC. Travelers returning home from areas with active Zika virus transmission should avoid being bitten by mosquitoes for three weeks following travel, especially while ill, to prevent infection of local mosquitoes. Women who were traveling in areas where Zika virus was active during their pregnancy should consult with their obstetrician.

8. What can I do to prevent the Zika virus?

The Florida Department of Health encourages Florida residents and visitors to protect themselves from all mosquito-borne illnesses by draining standing water; covering their skin with repellent and clothing; covering windows with screens; and other basic precautions.

DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying

- **Drain** water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- **Discard** old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- **Empty and clean** birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- **Protect** boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- **Maintain** swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent

- **Clothing** - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- **Repellent** - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
 - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535 are effective.
 - Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

9. Can Zika virus harm pets or livestock?

There is no evidence to date that suggests that Zika virus can harm domestic pets or livestock.

10. What is the status of Zika virus in Florida?

Florida has identified a small, one-square mile area in Miami-Dade County where active transmission of the virus is likely occurring. Florida's small case cluster is not considered widespread transmission. The current number of travel and non-travel related cases can be found in the department's daily Zika update, which is posted on our newsroom page.

12. Do you have Zika virus in Florida?

The department has confirmed some non-travel related cases of Zika in Florida and the majority of these cases are related to a small area in Miami-Dade County where active transmission is occurring. There is no active transmission of Zika virus outside of the one-square mile area in Miami-Dade County. Florida has also reported some Zika cases among people who traveled to other countries and contracted the virus there.

13. What is being done to prevent transmission of Zika virus in Florida?

Each suspected case of Zika virus infection is tested at the state public health laboratory. County health department staff report suspect Zika fever cases to local mosquito control staff to make sure mosquito control activities are put in place. State and local health departments work closely with other parties to make sure people at risk for Zika virus infections as well as health care providers stay informed with the most current science about Zika fever. We also provide education about effective repellents. These include products with DEET, picaridin, IR 3535 and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-methane-diol products.

14. Do you think Zika virus will spread in Florida?

We know, from our experience with dengue fever and chikungunya virus, which are spread by the same mosquito, that travelers who come back infected can infect local mosquito populations.

With what we know from dengue and chikungunya, it is very unlikely we will have large outbreaks of Zika fever in the United States. One major reason for this is that we have better housing with air conditioning and intact screens that protect us from being bitten by mosquitoes in our homes.

When locally acquired mosquito-borne illness is present, the department works closely with mosquito control to stop further transmission of the virus of concern. Mosquito control and the health department jointly provide public education whenever possible as well since it is very important that all residents cooperate and drain containers on their property at least weekly to help successfully control this mosquito. We would follow the same protocol for an outbreak of Zika virus.

15. Where can I find the most current information on Zika virus activity in Florida?

[The department has created a webpage with a variety of resources](#) for the public and health care community. Each day the department updates the website and issues a press release with case count information at 2 p.m. The department continues to proactively communicate with health care professionals, specifically obstetricians, regarding Zika.

16. Why do people say that pregnant mothers should be aware of this virus?

The Ministry of Health of Brazil has reported an increase in the numbers of newborns with microcephaly as well as other poor pregnancy outcomes in areas experiencing Zika virus outbreaks. The CDC is conducting research to further characterize the relationship between Zika virus and poor pregnancy outcomes. More studies are planned to learn more about the risks of Zika virus infection during pregnancy. There are many causes of microcephaly in babies, including genetic abnormalities.

17. Is it safe to travel to Florida?

Yes, traveling to Florida is safe. Florida's small case cluster is not considered widespread transmission. The CDC recommends that pregnant women limit unnecessary travel to the impacted area, which is one-square mile in Miami-Dade County. Travelers to Florida should always take precautions to protect against mosquito bites (such as repellents) and sun burns (sun screen, sun glasses).

18. I am pregnant and want to travel to Florida is it safe?

Yes, traveling to Florida is safe. Florida's small case cluster is not considered widespread transmission. The CDC recommends that pregnant women limit unnecessary travel to the impacted area, which is one-square mile in Miami-Dade County. Travelers to Florida should always take precautions to protect against mosquito bites (such as repellents) and sun burns (sun screen, sun glasses).

No, there is no reason related to Zika virus to postpone your travel to Florida. Florida's small case cluster is not considered widespread transmission.

20. I heard that you can contract Zika virus by sexual contact, is it true?

There is evidence to support that men can pass Zika to their male or female sexual partners, and females can pass Zika to their male, and possibly female, sexual partners during vaginal, anal and oral sex – before symptoms start, while symptoms are occurring, as well as after the symptoms end. According to CDC guidance, pregnant woman with sex partners (male or female) who live in or who have traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission should use barrier methods against infection or do not have sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

According to the CDC:

- **Couples who include a man who has been diagnosed with Zika or had symptoms of Zika** should consider using condoms or not having sex for **at least 6 months** after symptoms begin. This includes men who live in and men who traveled to areas with Zika.
- **Couples who include a man who traveled to an area with Zika but did not develop symptoms of Zika** should consider using condoms or not having sex for **at least 8 weeks** after their return.
- Couples with a non-pregnant female in which one partner has confirmed or suspected Zika virus infection or has traveled to a Zika-endemic area but has not developed symptoms consistent with Zika virus infection should either use barrier methods against infection or abstain from sexual contact.

21. Who can I call to spray for mosquitoes around my house?

In Florida, many counties and cities have mosquito control services. Please contact your county or city government offices to find out if these services are available in your area.

The mosquitoes that spread Zika breed in small containers so you can also limit your risk by making sure to dump all sources of standing water in bird baths, flower pots, etc. on your property at least weekly.

Additional Information

For more information on mosquito bite prevention visit Florida Department of Health, <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html> and <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/zika-virus/index.html>.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/> also available in Spanish, http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/mediosdecomunicacion/comunicados/d_recomendaciones_viajeros_virus_del_zika_011516.html.

For Mosquito-borne disease and vector surveillance, please visit, <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html> and <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/index.html>.