Question and Answers: Zika virus infection (Zika) and pregnancy

How is Zika virus (Zika) transmitted?

Zika is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. We do not know how often Zika is transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

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.

What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection (Zika)?

About one in five 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.

I am pregnant. How will Zika virus affect me or my unborn baby?

CDC has issued a travel alert (Level 2-Practice Enhanced Precautions) for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing: Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Suriname, and Venezuela.

This alert follows reports in Brazil of microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. However, additional studies are needed to further characterize this relationship. More studies are planned to learn more about the risks of Zika virus infection during pregnancy.

Until more is known, and out of an abundance of caution, CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:

- Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who do travel to one of these areas should talk to their doctor or other healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip.

- Women trying to become pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

Because specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are difficult to determine and likely to change over time, CDC will update this travel notice as information becomes available. Check the CDC travel website frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations.

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

No. There is no vaccine to prevent infection or medicine to treat Zika.
I am pregnant. Should I travel to a country where cases of Zika have been reported?

Until more is known, and out of an abundance of caution, CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:

• Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who do travel to one of these areas should talk to their doctor or other healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip.

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

Because specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are difficult to determine and likely to change over time, CDC will update this travel notice as information becomes available. Check the CDC travel website frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations.

Is it safe to use an insect repellent if I am pregnant or nursing?

Yes! Using an insect repellent is safe and effective. Pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding can and should choose an EPA-registered insect repellents and use it according to the product label.

If a woman who is not pregnant is bitten by a mosquito and infected with Zika virus, will her future pregnancies be at risk?

We do not know the risk to the baby if a woman is infected with Zika virus while she is pregnant. However, Zika virus infection does not pose a risk of birth defects for future pregnancies. Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for only a few days to a week. The virus will not cause infections in a baby that is conceived after the virus is cleared from the blood.

What should I do if I have Zika?

Treat the symptoms:

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

Protect others: During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another mosquito 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 country where Zika virus cases have been reported. Be sure to tell your health care provider where you traveled.