

# Preventing Zika During Pregnancy



Zika is a virus that causes a mild infection in most people, but can lead to severe complications. It can cause severe birth defects in an unborn baby if a pregnant woman has the virus and passes it to the fetus. There is no vaccine to prevent Zika infection. If you live in or travel to an area with Zika, you can take important steps to protect yourself and your family.

## How does Zika spread?

The Zika virus spreads through mosquito bites and sexual activity. To prevent infection during pregnancy, you need to protect yourself from mosquitoes and use protection during any sexual activity. Rarely, Zika can be spread through blood transfusions.

## Protecting yourself during pregnancy

If you are pregnant right now:

- Don't travel to areas with active Zika.
- If you do travel to an area with Zika, get tested for Zika within 2 weeks of returning home.
- If you live in an area with Zika, take steps to prevent mosquito bites (see below).
- If you live in or you or your partner travels to an area with Zika, use protection every time you have sexual activity. This includes vaginal, oral, and anal sex, and use of shared sex toys. Use condoms and dental dams. Or choose to not have sex during the pregnancy.
- Get tested for Zika as often as advised by your healthcare provider.

## Preventing mosquito bites

If you live in or travel to an area with Zika, protect yourself from mosquito bites. Make sure to:

- **Get rid of standing water in your yard.** Mosquitoes lay eggs near water. Check pots and planters, outdoor kids' toys, bird baths, and any other containers for puddles of water. Empty the water regularly and keep these areas clean and dry.
- **Choose air conditioning or screens.** At home, don't leave windows or doors open unless they have screens. Patch any holes in the screens. When picking a restaurant, hotel, or other venue, choose places with screens in windows and doors, or air conditioning.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Wear clothing that covers your body to prevent mosquito bites. Choose clothing with long sleeves and long pant legs. Wear socks and shoes to cover your feet and ankles.
- **Use insect skin spray often.** Buy a skin spray that is EPA-approved. Be sure it contains DEET, picaridin (also called KBR 3023, Bayrepel, or icaridin), oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), nootkatone, or IR3535. Make sure to follow the instructions on the label about how to apply and when to reapply. Use it during the day and at night. EPA-approved insect sprays are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women. For more information, visit the [EPA website at www.epa.gov/insect-repellents](http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents).
- **Use permethrin.** This is a type of insecticide you can apply to fabrics. If you are going camping, treat your clothing, shoes, and your tent with permethrin. You can also buy gear that's already treated. Don't use permethrin directly on your skin.
- **Sleep with a mosquito net.** Make sure to use a mosquito net if you are sleeping outdoors or in a place with no screens or air conditioning.

## **If you think you may have Zika**

If you live in or you or your partner visits an area with Zika, contact your healthcare provider right away if you have symptoms. Symptoms may be mild and can include fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes, muscle aches, and headache. You may need a blood or urine test to check for the virus. There is no treatment for Zika. If you test positive for Zika, your healthcare provider will closely watch the health of you and your baby during your pregnancy.

## **What is the U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry?**

If you test positive for Zika, your information will be put into the U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry. This is a way for the CDC to track the virus and how it affects pregnant women and babies. Your information is only used by the CDC's health centers so they can manage the virus and its effects. The information is sent to them by your healthcare provider. It may include details about your health and your baby's health up to 1 year old.

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