

Preventing Zika Infection Where You Live



Zika is a virus that causes a mild infection in most people, but can lead to severe complications. It may cause Guillain-Barré syndrome in adults, leading to severe muscle weakness or paralysis and, rarely, death. And it can cause severe birth defects in an unborn baby if a pregnant woman has the virus. There is no vaccine to prevent Zika infection. If you live in 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, you need to protect yourself from mosquitoes, and use protection during sexual activity.

Protection around your home

At home:

- **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.
- **Use door and window screens.** Don't leave windows or doors open unless they have screens. Patch any holes in the screens. Use air conditioners instead of opening doors and windows.
- **Use an indoor insect spray or fogger.** You can kill mosquitoes at home. Pick a spray that has imidacloprid, β -cyfluthrin, tetramethrin, or cypermethrin. Use it as directed on the product label.

Protection when you go out

Even if there are no symptoms, people returning from a place with Zika should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks so they don't spread Zika to uninfected mosquitoes. Infected mosquitoes can then spread Zika to uninfected people.

When you are outdoors:

- **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.
- **Apply an insect skin spray.** Be sure to read the product label before you buy the insect spray. Buy a skin spray that is EPA-approved and contains DEET, picaridin (also called KBR 3023, Bayrepel, or icaridin), oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), 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. Don't spray insect repellent on skin under your clothing. When using both sunscreen and insect spray, apply the sunscreen first.
- **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.

To protect a child from mosquito bites:

- **Dress your child in protective clothes.** Have your child wear clothes that cover his or her arms, legs, feet, and ankles.
- **Apply insect spray to your child's skin.** Be sure to read the product label before you buy the insect spray. Don't use it on a baby younger than 2 months old. Don't put it on a child's hands, eyes, or mouth.

Don't use insect skin spray on a child under age 3 if the spray has oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD).

- **Use a mosquito net for your child.** Put a mosquito net over the stroller and crib.

Protection during sex

Make sure to use protection every time you have sex. This includes vaginal, oral, and anal sex, and use of shared sex toys. Use condoms and dental dams. If your partner is pregnant, you may want to choose to not have sex during the pregnancy.

Many people with Zika have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. If a partner has traveled to a Zika-infected area, couples should assume the person is infected and take precautions during sex. Even without symptoms, Zika can stay in the semen for months after an infection, allowing for disease transmission during unprotected sex.

If you have symptoms of Zika

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you have symptoms of Zika. 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.

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