

# ZIKA FACT SHEET

## What is Zika?

Zika is an illness caused by a virus closely related to yellow fever, dengue, and West Nile viruses. It is spread by certain types of mosquitos. Zika is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. Microcephaly is a birth defect in which a baby's head is smaller than expected.

## Who can get Zika?

Anyone. Most cases of Zika in the continental United States have occurred among travelers to Zika-affected areas, which are primarily Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

## What are the symptoms of Zika?

About one in five people with Zika develop symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes (conjunctivitis). Other symptoms could include muscle pain and headache. These symptoms are similar to those that develop with dengue and chikungunya.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

The time from exposure to when symptoms begin is unknown, but is likely a few days to one week.

## How is Zika spread?

Zika is primarily spread when a mosquito bites an infected person and then bites someone else. It is spread by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitos. These mosquitos bite during the day and are the same types of mosquitos that spread dengue and chikungunya. A pregnant woman can spread Zika to her fetus during pregnancy, or to her newborn around the time of birth. Zika can also be spread by a man to his partner during sex (including anal and vaginal sex).

## Is there a vaccine for Zika?

No, currently there is no vaccine to protect against Zika.

## How is Zika treated?

There is no specific treatment for Zika. Aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs should be avoided until dengue can be ruled out to reduce the risk of bleeding. Symptoms usually last for several days to a week.

## Is there a test for Zika?

Yes. Testing is currently performed by the DC Public Health Laboratory and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Ask your health care provider if you qualify for testing.

## How can people prevent the spread of Zika?

Pregnant women should postpone travel to Zika-affected areas. If their partner traveled to or resides in an area with ongoing spread, the couple should use condoms or abstain from sex for the duration of the pregnancy. Anyone traveling to Zika-affected areas should take the following steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors
- Use air conditioning if possible, keeping windows closed
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved insect repellents
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items

If you have Zika, protect others from getting sick by avoiding mosquito bites for the first week of illness. Men diagnosed with Zika or who have symptoms of Zika should wait at least six months after symptom onset before attempting conception. Women diagnosed with Zika or who have symptoms of Zika should wait at least eight weeks after symptom onset before attempting conception. Anyone possibly exposed to Zika and who does not have symptoms should wait at least eight weeks after the last date of travel before attempting conception. Even if they do not feel sick, travelers returning to the US from Zika-affected areas should wear insect repellent and avoid mosquito bites for three weeks to prevent spreading the virus to mosquitoes locally.

## Where can I get more information?

Information about Zika and other related health topics can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov>. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit [www.doh.dc.gov](http://www.doh.dc.gov) or email us at [doh.epi@dc.gov](mailto:doh.epi@dc.gov)