

# Zika virus and pregnancy

Zika virus is an infection spread by mosquitoes in certain countries. It can also be passed from person to person during unprotected sex.

If you are pregnant, the Zika virus may cause serious birth defects. There is no vaccine or medicine to treat Zika virus. Take special precautions if you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy and you must travel to an affected area.

Zika virus can damage a baby's developing brain. Occasionally, Zika virus infection can cause a serious birth defect known as microcephaly. This means that a baby has an abnormally small head.

Microcephaly can cause developmental delays, feeding difficulties and convulsions. It can sometimes be detected before birth using an ultrasound scan.

## Travelling to an affected area

If you are pregnant or are planning to conceive, you should avoid travelling to countries where there is a risk of Zika virus.

If your travel is essential, talk to your GP or visit a travel clinic before travelling.

[Countries affected by Zika virus - cdc.gov](#)

## Symptoms

Most people with Zika virus have no symptoms at all.

If you do get symptoms, they might include:

- mild fever
- aches and pains
- headaches
- itchy rash
- [conjunctivitis \(red or sore eyes\)](#)

## Treatment

There is no treatment for Zika virus, even if you are pregnant.

It is recommended to:

- rest
- drink plenty of fluids
- relieve pain, fever and other symptoms

## Pregnancy advice if you have returned from an affected area

Find advice on what to do if you have returned from an affected area and:

- you are pregnant
- your partner is pregnant
- you are planning a pregnancy

### If you are pregnant

If you have returned from an affected area, speak to your GP or midwife even if you have not been ill. Your GP or midwife will discuss the risks with you and may refer you for an ultrasound scan.

If you develop symptoms of Zika virus within 10 days of returning from an affected area, speak to your GP. It takes 3 to 12 days for symptoms to develop after infection.

You may need to have a blood test and extra monitoring during your pregnancy.

### If your partner is pregnant

Use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy if your partner is pregnant.

Do this even if:

- just you travelled to an affected area
- you both travelled to an affected area

### If you are trying to get pregnant

If you travelled to an area with Zika virus without your partner, wait 8 weeks after returning before trying to get pregnant. If you were ill with Zika virus, wait for 8 weeks after your symptoms end before trying to get pregnant.

It is important you use effective [contraception](#) to prevent pregnancy. We also advise that you use condoms for all vaginal, anal and oral sex during and after your travel.

If your partner is male and he travelled to an area with Zika virus, you should delay getting pregnant for

- 3 months after his return from the area if he did not get ill with Zika
- 3 months after his symptoms end if he did get ill with Zika

## Men returning from affected countries

If your partner is pregnant, use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy.

If your partner is not pregnant, delay getting them pregnant for:

- 3 months after returning from the area if you don't have Zika
- 3 months after symptoms end if you get ill with Zika

[Zika virus and pregnancy - hpsc.ie](https://hpsc.ie)

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