

ZIKA VIRUS

Students and staff who are traveling to [Zika-affected areas](#) should take special precautions.

OVERVIEW

Zika virus disease (Zika) is caused by the Zika virus, which is primarily spread to people through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The virus can also be transmitted through blood transfusions and unprotected sex. While most people who become infected are asymptomatic, Zika has been linked to severe fetal brain defects, such as microcephaly.

Zika is currently considered a travel disease, but it is anticipated to spread.

The Florida Department of Health has identified an area in one neighborhood of Miami where Zika is being spread by mosquitoes. People who live in or traveled to this area any time after June 15, 2016 should follow this guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/intheus/florida-update.html>.

Individuals – both male and female – who are planning to travel to affected areas should [take precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites](#) and [practice safer sex](#).

[Visit the CDC for information about symptoms, precautions and more.](#)

SYMPTOMS

Most infections are asymptomatic (have no symptoms). However, the most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week after being bitten by an infected mosquito. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika. Once infected, a person is likely to be protected from future infections.

TRANSMISSION

Transmission can occur while traveling to Zika-affected areas and, if infected while traveling, it can spread to others when you return.

Mosquito Bites

Zika is transmitted to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito (*A. aegypti* and *A. albopictus*), which also spreads dengue and chikungunya viruses. These mosquitoes typically lay eggs in and near standing water. They prefer to bite people, and live indoors and outdoors near people. They are aggressive daytime biters, but also bite at night. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to other people through bites.

Sexual Contact

Zika can be spread by a male to his sex partners. In known cases of sexual transmission, transmission occurred before, during and after symptoms. [Zika is present in semen longer than in blood.](#)

- Abstain from sexual activity or use a condom consistently and correctly from start to finish every time you have sex (vaginal, oral and anal).

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Pregnancy

A pregnant female can pass Zika to her fetus during pregnancy. Zika is linked to a specific birth defect called microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. This link is so strong that the CDC issued travel guidance for pregnant females and females trying to become pregnant. Continued on page 2.

TRANSMISSION/Pregnancy/continued

Pregnant females (any trimester):

- Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.
- If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your health care provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.

Females trying to become pregnant:

- Before you travel, talk to your health care provider about your plans to become pregnant and the risk of Zika virus infection and recommendations for timeframe to wait before becoming pregnant.
- Strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip.
- Take steps to prevent getting Zika through sex.

Pregnant females with a male sexual partner who has traveled to, or live in, an area affected by active Zika virus transmission:

- Refrain from sex or use condoms during sex until the pregnancy is over.
 - To prevent pregnancy and/or sexual transmission of the disease abstain from sexual activity or use a condom consistently and correctly from start to finish every time you have sex (vaginal, oral and anal).
- **Blood Transfusions**

PROTECTION

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to avoid being bitten. Travelers can limit their exposure to Zika (and other mosquito-borne illnesses like Malaria, Dengue Fever and Chikungunya by taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites (***both during the day and at night***). Here's how:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items. Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last. If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully.
- Do NOT use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.

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- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. All EPA-registered insect repellents are evaluated for effectiveness. Of the products registered with the EPA, those containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol product provide longer-lasting protection. Continued on page 3.

PROTECTION/continued

- Always follow the product label instructions.
- Reapply insect repellent as directed.
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin
- Do not apply to eyes or mouth and apply sparingly around ears.
- Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent. It is not recommended that you use a product that has both sunscreen and insect repellent containing DEET.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water or bathe.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

RETURNING FROM YOUR TRAVELS

Even if you do not feel sick, travelers returning to the United States from areas infected with Zika should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks so they do not spread Zika to mosquitoes here in the United States that could spread the virus to other people.

The World Health Organization recommends that people returning from areas where local transmission of Zika virus occurs should adopt safer sexual practices or consider abstinence for at least 4 weeks after their return to reduce the risk of onward transmission.

The CDC recommends that males who traveled to an area with Zika but did not develop symptoms of Zika should consider using condoms or not having sex for at least 8 weeks after their return in order to minimize risk of transmission.

OTHER CONCERNS

Zika and Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS)

Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) is an uncommon sickness of the nervous system in which a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness, and sometimes, paralysis. In Brazil there have been cases of people who have been infected with Zika virus who also have GBS. GBS is very likely triggered by Zika in a small proportion of infections. CDC is investigating the link between Zika and GBS.

CONCLUSION

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If you are concerned about a risk of exposure to Zika related to upcoming travel, contact a specialist in travel medicine, such as Travel Clinic at UNH Health Services. Pregnant women, or women planning to become pregnant, should consult with their Obstetrician//Gynecologist.

MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

The World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/>

International SOS: <https://pandemic.internationalsos.com/zika>