



Zika

What is Zika and how is it spread?

Zika is a virus mostly spread through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person already infected with Zika. Infected mosquitoes can then spread Zika to other people through bites.

There has been no local transmission of Zika in Bermuda. Zika may be introduced to Bermuda by travelers who have been in areas where mosquitoes carrying the virus are present. These would be classified as imported or travel-related cases. Local transmission (non-travel-related cases) may occur from imported cases as Zika virus can be passed from an infected person to a mosquito. The Zika-infected mosquito can then spread Zika to other persons

The *Aedes albopictus* mosquito is present in Bermuda. *Aedes albopictus* live indoors and outdoors near people. They are aggressive daytime biters, but can also bite at night and may be able to spread the Zika virus if it bites a person infected with the virus.

Zika can also be spread from pregnant mother with Zika to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

There is also a risk of getting Zika through any form of sexual contact with a person who has Zika, even if the infected person does not have symptoms at the time.

The spread of Zika through blood transfusion and organ donations is being investigated.

Who gets Zika?

Anyone who has not already been infected with Zika virus is at risk for infection.

What are the symptoms of Zika?

Most people have no symptoms and might not realize that they have been infected. For people who get symptoms, the illness is usually mild.

The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Symptoms usually begin 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

What countries have ongoing transmission of Zika?

Outbreaks are occurring in many countries in the Americas region. Specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are likely to change over time: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/active-countries.html>

What can travelers do to prevent getting Zika?

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika Virus. Travelers to Zika affected countries can protect themselves while in the country by:

- Preventing mosquito bites:**
 - Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
 - Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535. Always use as directed. Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use all EPA-registered insect repellents.
 - Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself.
 - Stay and sleep in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms. Use bed nets if required
- Using safer sexual practices** including correct and consistent use of condoms.

How can I protect others when I return from a country where there is Zika?

Because the illness is usually mild and many people will not have any symptoms, **all persons returning to Bermuda from an area affected by Zika should:**

- Continue to take steps to prevent mosquito bites on return for at least 3 weeks**
- Take steps to reduce mosquito breeding on and around their property or residence** Mosquitoes can breed in the smallest amount of water so ensure that any object that can collect water is emptied around your residence.
- Continue to use safer sex practices** including abstaining from sex or correctly and consistently using condoms (and dental dams as appropriate) for all forms of sexual contact. **Pregnant women should use condoms or not have sex for the rest of the pregnancy.** The recommended period

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of time for taking these precautions in other situations can be found here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/transmission/sexual-transmission.html>

If you are a blood donor, **inform the Blood Donor Centre of your recent travel before donation.** Your blood donation may be postponed.

What should I do if I develop symptoms of Zika?

If you have or had symptoms of Zika (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes)

1. **See your health care provider**
 - Tell your healthcare provider if you (or your sexual partner) have recently traveled and if you (or your sexual partner) had symptoms while travelling
 - Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika or other similar viral diseases like dengue or chikungunya.
2. **Treat the symptoms:**
 - Get plenty of rest
 - Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
 - Take medicines only as directed by your healthcare provider.
3. **Avoid mosquito bites while ill**, especially during the first week of illness.

Can I be tested for Zika?

Testing is available for persons with Zika exposure and symptoms. Persons should see their healthcare provider as soon as possible after symptoms start if they are returning from a country with ongoing spread of Zika or had unprotected sex with a person who lives in or traveled to an area with ongoing spread of Zika.

Testing is also available for pregnant women without symptoms within two weeks or less after exposure. This includes pregnant women who are returning from a country with ongoing spread of Zika or had unprotected sex with a person who lives in or traveled to an area with ongoing spread of Zika. Pregnant women should see their healthcare provider as soon as possible after being exposed to Zika. Your healthcare provider may also discuss ways to monitor the baby, for example, through frequent ultrasounds.

How can Zika affect a pregnant woman or her unborn baby?

There are special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant as poor pregnancy outcomes and birth defects, including microcephaly (abnormally small head and incomplete brain development) have been reported in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika while pregnant.

Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy should consider avoiding travel to the areas where Zika virus is spreading.

Pregnant women who must travel to one of these areas should talk to their healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip.

Pregnant women who travel to areas where Zika virus is spreading should mention this during their pregnancy check-ups.

Women trying to become pregnant should check with their healthcare provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

Does Zika cause other problems?

In addition to developmental harms during pregnancy, persons of all ages infected with Zika may develop Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS). GBS is an uncommon sickness of the nervous system where a person's own immune system damages the nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes, paralysis. These symptoms can last a few weeks or several months. While most people fully recover from GBS, some people have permanent damage and in rare cases, people have died.

A health care provider should be consulted immediately if you develop symptoms of GBS, especially after travel to a Zika affected country.

What is Bermuda doing to prevent transmission of Zika?

Healthcare providers are to report all suspected and confirmed cases of Zika to the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU). The ESU investigates all reported cases and, with the assistance of the Vector Control Programme within Environmental Health, puts control measures in place to prevent any ongoing spread. Vector Control also routinely monitors the mosquito population and gets rid of mosquito breeding sites.

Additionally, the ESU routinely monitors reported syndromes such as "Fever and Rash", as an early warning sign for mosquito-borne diseases such as Zika. Any increase in reports of symptoms suggestive of Zika would be investigated to determine the cause.

Ongoing monitoring for ill travelers continues at the LF Wade International Airport with the assistance of Customs and Immigration.

Adapted from:
"Zika virus." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016
<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/about/index.html>
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