

## Key aspects briefly summarized

- Zika is a usually mild viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes that bite during the day.
- Infection during pregnancy (any time) can cause fetal malformation.
- In areas with increased risk of Zika transmission, pregnant women or those planning a pregnancy should take extra precautions: please see the information below.

## Occurrence | Risk areas

The Zika virus was first found in 1947 in monkeys in Uganda's Zika forest. Until May 2015, the virus circulation was mainly limited to Africa and South-East Asia. Then an epidemic spread to the Americas, starting in Brazil, and then to South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Since then, the disease has spread to most tropical and subtropical regions. While the risk of infection risk is currently low, epidemics may reappear and require specific travel advices (see below).

## Transmission

Zika virus is transmitted by the bites of infected mosquitoes (*Aedes* spp. including 'tiger mosquito'), which bite during the day, especially at dawn and dusk. These mosquitoes are also common in tropical and subtropical cities. The virus can be transmitted from person to person, during pregnancy (from infected mother to her fetus), unprotected sex with an infected person (with or without symptoms) or blood transfusion.

## Symptoms

About 80% of infected people have no symptoms. When symptoms do appear, usually within 2 weeks of a mosquito bite, they are generally mild and include moderate fever, rash (often itchy), conjunctivitis, joint pain, headache, muscle pain, and digestive disorders. Most patients recover spontaneously in 5-7 days. Although rare, neurological (Guillain-Barré syndrome) and immunological complications may occur. Zika infection during pregnancy, at any stage, can lead to fetal malformations.

## Treatment

Zika symptoms can resemble those of malaria, which requires urgent treatment, or other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue. Therefore: If you have a fever, consult a doctor for an accurate diagnosis! Treatment for Zika targets reduction of fever and joint pain (with paracetamol). Avoid aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen) as long as dengue fever is not excluded. There is no vaccine available.

If pregnant and experiencing fever during or after returning from a Zika virus transmission area, blood and/or urine tests are recommended. If Zika infection is confirmed, medical management should be coordinated with a gynecologist and specialists in infectious or travel medicine.

## Prevention

- **Travelling in pregnancy poses an increased risk for the mother and the baby for mosquito-transmitted diseases. Please refer to the [pregnancy factsheet](#).**
- Always protect yourself from mosquito bites during the day and early evening, see factsheet [mosquito-bite prevention](#).
- If traveling in an **area with increased risk of Zika transmission** (see areas in [Zika Health Travel Notice](#)):
  - ✓ **If you are pregnant:** women at any stage of pregnancy **should reconsider their travel plans**. If travel is essential, consult a travel medicine specialist before departure.
  - ✓ **If your partner is pregnant:** use condoms **throughout pregnancy** to prevent possible sexual transmission of Zika.
  - ✓ **If you or your partner is planning to become pregnant:**
    - Use condoms throughout your trip and for at least two months after returning home to prevent possible sexual transmission of Zika without symptoms.
    - You should wait at least 2 months after returning from an area with an increased risk of Zika transmission before getting pregnant.

## Of note

- Zika virus infection during pregnancy (any trimester) can cause fetal malformation.
- For most up-to-date information on Zika epidemics (= increased risk of transmission), please see 'Zika Travel Health Notices' of the US Center of Disease and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>

## Further Information

- US Center of Disease Control and Prevention: Zika virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>
- European Center for Disease Control and Prevention: [Zika virus disease](#)

No guarantee can be given for the accuracy and completeness of the medical information, nor can any liability be accepted for any damage that may occur.