



Zika: What You Need to Know

Key Points:

- Zika virus is primarily spread through bites from Zika-infected mosquitoes in areas with active Zika virus transmission (see www.cdc.gov/zika for up-to-date areas).
- Most people infected with Zika do not develop symptoms. For those who do, the illness is generally mild with symptoms lasting from a few days to a week.
- There have been reports of birth defects associated with Zika infection. Pregnant woman should consider postponing travel to areas with active Zika virus transmission.
- Everyone should protect themselves from mosquito bites. Wear mosquito repellent, long sleeves and pants, eliminate standing water around your home, and keep mosquitos outside by using air conditioning and window screens (see www.cdc.gov/features/stopmosquitoes/)

What is Zika? (pronounced "ZEE-ka")

Zika is a virus primarily spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes. The virus was first discovered in Uganda in 1947 and past outbreaks have occurred in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Zika was first detected in the Americas in 2015.

How do people get Zika virus?

Zika is mainly spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes. It can also spread from mothers to babies during pregnancy or at birth, and through blood transfusions or sexual contact with an infected person.

What are symptoms of Zika?

Symptoms develop within 2-7 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito and are usually mild. Only 1 in 5 people develop symptoms. Persons with illness from Zika will have one or more of:

- **Fever**
- **Rash**
- **Joint pain**
- **Red eyes**

Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone living or traveling in an area with active Zika transmission who has not already been infected is at risk. Sexual partners of males who have lived in or traveled to these countries may also be at risk. A list of areas with active Zika transmission can be found on the CDC Zika webpage: www.cdc.gov/zika

Why is there concern about Zika?

Two rare conditions may be associated with Zika: microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS). Microcephaly is a birth defect where an infant's head is smaller than normal. In GBS, the immune system attacks nerve cells, causing weakness and sometimes paralysis.

Is there treatment for Zika?

There is no specific medicine to treat Zika, but you can manage its symptoms. If ill, you should:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink water to prevent dehydration.
- Take acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain – do NOT take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen).
- Stay indoors to avoid mosquito bites while ill.

What if I have been to an area with active Zika transmission recently?

- **If you are pregnant**, call your doctor.
- **If you show symptoms of Zika disease within 2 weeks of travel**, call your doctor.

What will my doctor do?

If your doctor thinks you may have Zika, they will call Alexandria Health Department (AHD) to discuss testing. They may also test for other mosquito-borne illnesses that cause similar symptoms such as dengue and chikungunya.

How can I prevent becoming infected with Zika?

- There is no vaccine to prevent Zika.
- **If you are pregnant**, CDC recommends you postpone travel to areas with active Zika transmission. You should discuss your partner's travel history, and any Zika-like illness that they may have had with your doctor.
- **If you are trying to become pregnant**, call your doctor before you travel.
- **Men who have traveled to an area with active Zika transmission and have a pregnant sex partner**, or who are concerned about Zika transmission to a non-pregnant partner, should abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms.
- **If you must travel to an area with active Zika transmission**, protect yourself to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. See: www.cdc.gov/features/stopmosquitoes/

What is Public Health doing?

- Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and AHD provide doctors updated guidance on Zika and on testing protocols
- AHD's Vector Control Program
 - Informs the community on how everyone can reduce the risk of mosquito bites
 - Traps and tests mosquitoes
 - Inspects and larvicides storm drains
 - Investigates complaints about mosquitoes

Where can I learn more about Zika?

- Visit the AHD website for links to state and national resources:
www.alexandriava.gov/Health