

What is Zika virus?

Zika virus (or Zika fever) is an illness you get from certain types of mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*). It's caused by a virus, an organism that uses your cells to make more copies of itself. Most people don't know they have it or have very mild symptoms. If a person who's pregnant gets infected, the virus can prevent the fetus's brain from developing properly.

Where is Zika virus found?

The mosquitoes that carry Zika are found in many parts of the world. There have been outbreaks of Zika in the Americas, the Caribbean and parts of Africa and Asia.

Is there a current Zika virus outbreak?

There was a Zika epidemic from 2014 to 2017 in the Americas, with outbreaks in the U.S. in 2015 and 2016. Cases of Zika in the U.S. since then have been in people who got infected while traveling outside of the U.S.

How serious is Zika virus?

Zika is very serious for people who are pregnant because it can interfere with the fetus's development. Zika is usually mild for most other adults and children.

Symptoms and Causes

What are the symptoms of Zika?

Only about 1 in 5 people with Zika have symptoms, which include:

- Fever.
- Headache.
- Joint pain.
- Redness in the whites of your eyes ([pink eye/conjunctivitis](#)).
- Rash that's a mix of raised and flat red areas of skin (maculopapular), which can be itchy.

What causes Zika?

A type of flavivirus (an RNA virus usually spread by mosquitoes) causes Zika infections. The viruses that cause [dengue fever](#) and [West Nile](#) infections are also types of flavivirus.

How does Zika virus spread?

Zika virus can spread in many ways, including:

- **Mosquitoes.** The most common way to get Zika is through the bite of *Ae. aegypti* and *Ae. albopictus* mosquitoes. You can find these mosquitoes in many parts of the world, including the U.S. They spread Zika when they bite someone who's infected and then bite someone else.
- **Pregnant person to fetus.** If you're pregnant and have a Zika infection, it can pass through the [placenta](#) to the fetus. Zika can cause your child to be born with congenital (present at birth) conditions like microcephaly.
- **Sexual contact.** Zika virus can stay in body fluids, like semen, for weeks to months after an infection, even if you never had symptoms or your symptoms have gone away. It can spread to other people through oral, anal or vaginal sex.
- **Blood transfusion.** Health officials have reported Zika transmission through [blood transfusions](#) in Brazil and France in the past. There's never been a reported case of Zika spreading through blood transfusions in the U.S.

How long am I contagious?

Some studies show that you can spread Zika through sex for up to six weeks after your symptoms start. Since you can have Zika without symptoms, the CDC recommends using condoms during sex or not having sex for three months after traveling to an area where Zika is common.

Diagnosis and Tests

How is Zika diagnosed?

A healthcare provider diagnoses Zika by looking for signs of the virus in your blood or pee (urine). Your provider will usually only test for Zika if you've been to a place with risk for Zika and you have symptoms. They'll ask you about your symptoms and recent travel to determine whether they'll test for Zika.

Management and Treatment

How is Zika virus treated?

There's no specific medication that treats or cures Zika. Your provider can help you manage your symptoms and tell you how to keep from spreading the virus to others. If you're pregnant and test positive for Zika, your pregnancy care provider will help you manage your symptoms safely.

How do I manage the symptoms of Zika?

You can manage most symptoms of Zika at home with over-the-counter (OTC) medications like acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Don't take [aspirin](#) or [NSAIDS](#) (like Advil®, Motrin® or Aleve®) unless your provider says it's okay. Other illnesses with symptoms similar to Zika have a risk of bleeding with these medications. If you have one of these diseases instead of Zika, taking aspirin or NSAIDS can put you at risk for severe bleeding.

Does Zika virus go away?

Zika virus infections usually go away on their own. But if a person is pregnant and has Zika, it can cause [congenital \(present at birth\) conditions](#) in their baby, such as vision loss or improper brain development. These conditions are permanent.

Prevention

How can I prevent Zika?

Ways to reduce your risk of getting or spreading a Zika infection include:

- **Protect yourself from mosquitoes.** If you're traveling to an area with a risk of Zika or a current Zika outbreak, cover exposed skin with clothing and wear EPA-registered insect repellent. Sleep indoors in a room with screens in the windows or under a mosquito bed net. Avoid getting mosquito bites for at least three weeks after you return from travel.
- **Use condoms or abstain from sex.** If you've traveled to an area with a risk of Zika or a current outbreak, use a condom or avoid (abstain from) oral, anal and vaginal sex for three months after returning, even if you don't have symptoms. Don't share sex toys with others, as they can spread Zika, too. This is true even if you have sex with the same partner every time.
- **Avoid traveling to areas with Zika if you're pregnant.** If you travel to an area with a risk of Zika, let your pregnancy care provider know and keep an eye out for symptoms of Zika. If there's an outbreak where you live while you're pregnant, take precautions to avoid mosquito bites and use condoms during sex or don't have sex. Talk to your provider about other ways to prevent infection.
- **Take precautions if you or your partner wants to become pregnant.** If you or your partner travels to an area with a risk of Zika or has been diagnosed with Zika, wait to try to get pregnant. This will reduce your risk of passing an infection to the fetus. Current guidelines suggest it's safest to wait two months (for people assigned female at birth) or three months (for people assigned male at birth) to have sex after traveling or the start of your symptoms. If you live in an area with a Zika outbreak while you're trying to get pregnant, talk to your provider about how to prevent infection.

