



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
April 5, 2016

Frequently Asked Questions on Zika Virus

Background Information

What is Zika virus?

Zika is a virus that is spread to people mainly when an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito bites them. The virus is closely related to yellow fever, dengue, and West Nile viruses.

Where did it come from?

Zika virus was first identified in Uganda in monkeys in 1947 and in people in Nigeria in 1948. It was known to occasionally cause disease in a few people in African and Asian countries. In 2007, however, a major outbreak on Yap Island in Micronesia occurred during which approximately 75% of residents were infected. In 2013, a large outbreak also occurred on French Polynesia, and in April 2015, a massive outbreak was recognized in Brazil. Zika virus has been spreading throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean quickly since then.

Are there any cases of Zika in the United States?

There have been cases of Zika identified in the United States but only so far in people who were traveling in places where Zika is present in mosquitoes or in women who contracted it from their male sex partners who traveled to a Zika-affected region. No people have yet been infected by mosquito bites in the United States. Some U.S. territories have ongoing Zika transmission, however.

Are there any cases of Zika in New Hampshire?

Yes, the first Zika case in New Hampshire was detected in March and was a female whose male partner traveled to a Zika-affected region. A [listing of case counts](#) for New Hampshire will be published weekly on the DHHS website.

Why is Zika spreading so quickly?

The virus is spreading rapidly probably because this is a new virus to the people in South and Central America and the Caribbean. They do not have any immunity or protection from it. Also, the climate conditions have been very favorable for the mosquitoes that transmit Zika.

Virus Transmission

How do people get Zika virus?

The primary way people contract the virus is being bitten by an infected mosquito. Male-to-female sexual transmission has also been proven. Because most of the previously infected

populations in Africa and Asia were not traveling out of the region, it was previously believed they were all infected by mosquitoes.

Do animals/birds carry Zika?

The role of animals/birds in this epidemic is not known. Some animals can be infected with the virus, but not birds.

Is Zika in mosquitoes in the United States?

Zika has not yet been identified in mosquitoes in the U.S. However, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which can transmit the virus is found in some southern states, including Florida, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama, so it is anticipated that Zika may be introduced into the mosquitoes of this region if they bite a traveler who returns from the epidemic region and who has Zika in their blood.

Are the mosquitoes that carry Zika found in New Hampshire?

No. The two main mosquito species that can transmit Zika have not been found in New Hampshire

Can the virus be transmitted from mother to child?

Yes, Zika can be passed from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or birth.

Can the virus be transmitted from an infected man to a woman through sexual contact?

Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that men who reside in or have traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual contact or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex for the duration of the pregnancy. Men who have traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission who do not have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity or use condoms consistently and correctly during sex for 8 weeks after returning. Men who have had symptoms of Zika virus should abstain from sex or use condoms for 6 months after symptoms resolve because the virus can stay in the semen much longer than in blood. For more information visit the [CDC website](#). These recommendations may change further as research tells us more about the risk of sexual transmission.

Can a woman with Zika pass it to her male sex partner?

This has not been documented to occur.

Can the virus be spread through saliva?

The virus has been found in saliva, but it has not been shown to transmit this way. More studies need to be done to know for sure.

Can the virus be spread through blood?

Yes, which is why the Red Cross has asked that people refrain from donating blood for 28 days after traveling to a country where there is active [Zika virus transmission](#) occurring. They also ask that if a donor does donate and subsequently develops symptoms consistent with Zika virus within 14 days of that donation that they immediately notify the Red Cross so that the blood product can be quarantined. In March, the Food and Drug Administration approved a

test to detect Zika in blood for use in Puerto Rico and later the United States, so that the blood supply can be screened.

After having Zika virus, are people immune?

Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections.

Travel Precautions and Prevention

What countries should I avoid traveling to?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a list on their [website](#). The disease is spreading, so it is important to check this list for updates before traveling. Travel that is limited to elevations higher than 2,000 m (6,562 ft) above sea level, however, is considered to have minimal (approximately 1%) likelihood for mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission, even within countries reporting active transmission. Women who are pregnant should avoid travel to elevations <2,000 m in countries with active Zika virus transmission.

Why is there not a travel advisory for pregnant women traveling to endemic regions, such as Africa and Asia?

Countries in Africa and Asia with longstanding sporadic, but not sustained, circulation of Zika virus and a degree of population immunity are not considered to have enough risk to travelers. And therefore, these countries do not have current CDC Travel Warnings or Travax Current Health Bulletins; risk to travelers is unknown but considered very low.

What precautions should I take if I have to go to a country with Zika?

- It is important to prevent mosquito bites. 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.
 - Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered](#) insect repellents. All EPA-registered insect repellents are evaluated for safety and effectiveness. Follow all product label instructions.
 - Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated items. See product information on how long the protection lasts.
 - Do **NOT** use permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.
 - Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites.
 - If you have a baby or child, do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age. Instead dress your child in clothes that cover arms and legs, use mosquito netting over crib, stroller, and baby carrier. Do not apply repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth or cut or irritated skin.
- Also visit a [travel clinic](#) before going overseas to make sure you are protected from other communicable diseases.

What can people do to keep from getting Zika virus if they are not traveling?

The only possible way to get Zika virus in New Hampshire without traveling to a Zika-affected region is by having sex with someone who did and has Zika.

Illness and Treatment

What are the symptoms of Zika infection?

Only about 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will have symptoms. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild. For this reason, many people might not realize they have been infected. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and/or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Zika can also cause birth defects especially microcephaly (small head and brain) in babies born to mothers who become infected while pregnant. Zika has also been linked to a neurological condition called Guillain-Barré syndrome.

How long does it take to develop symptoms after you are infected?

Symptoms typically begin 2 to 7 days after someone is bitten by an infected mosquito.

If most people don't exhibit symptoms how do I know if someone is infected?

The only way to tell if someone has or had Zika if they do not exhibit symptoms is with a lab test.

How dangerous is Zika virus?

Most people do not develop any symptoms and those who do almost always recover within about a week. Only a few deaths have ever been reported linked to the virus. The biggest concern is for birth defects in babies born to mothers infected while they were pregnant.

Does Zika virus cause Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?

There is more evidence that Zika can lead to GBS, but this has not been conclusively proven yet.

Are some people more vulnerable to GBS than others?

That is not known at this time. The greatest concern though is for unborn babies because of the risk of microcephaly and other birth defects.

Is there a test for Zika virus?

Yes, there are lab tests that can tell if someone has the Zika virus or previously had the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NH Public Health Laboratory are able to perform these tests.

Is there a treatment for Zika virus?

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus infection, except to treat the symptoms:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
- Take medicine such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and pain
- DO NOT take aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) as they have been linked to Reye syndrome.
- If you are taking a medicine for another medical condition, talk with your healthcare provider before taking any additional medication.

Is there a vaccine for Zika virus?

Not at this time, but researchers are working on one.

What do I do if I think I have Zika or have been exposed to Zika?

Contact your healthcare provider.

Zika, Pregnancy, and Women of Childbearing Age**Can a mother give Zika virus to her unborn baby?**

Yes, the virus can be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or birth.

What is the risk to the fetus?

An infected fetus may develop birth defects, especially microcephaly, which is characterized by a small head and possible brain damage.

What do I do if I am pregnant?

If you have not traveled to a country/region with active Zika transmission and do not have a sexual partner who has, you have no risk for Zika. If you have traveled to a country/region with active Zika transmission and/or do have a sexual partner who has, you should consult with your obstetrician.

Should I travel if I am pregnant?

You should postpone travel to countries where there is [active transmission](#) of the Zika virus while pregnant. If you must travel to one of these locations, talk with your obstetrician and take the precautions listed under the question, What precautions should I take if I have to go to a country with Zika?

If I already had Zika, can I give it to my baby if I get pregnant in the future?

No. Once someone has cleared the virus and has developed immunity, usually within 2 weeks, they cannot give it to someone else, including an unborn baby.

What do I do if my husband/boyfriend traveled to a country with Zika?

Pregnant women are advised not to travel to areas with active Zika virus transmission and to consistently and correctly use condoms during sex (i.e., vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, or fellatio) or to abstain from sex for the duration of the pregnancy with male partners who reside in or have traveled to [areas with active Zika virus transmission](#).

Can Zika be transmitted through breast milk?

Zika virus has been found in breastmilk, but it is not known whether breastfeeding can cause an infection in the baby. CDC says the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh possible risks to an infant.

New Hampshire Activities**What is New Hampshire doing to address Zika virus?**

The NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), including the Division of Public Health Services, have been tracking this virus, developing testing protocols, and establishing surveillance in the event any cases are identified in travelers returning to New Hampshire. DHHS has also been coordinating with partners in the healthcare system in the State and in frequent communication with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prepare for the spread of this disease and will continue to do so. We are also working hard to keep the public informed, such as through our [website](#).

For more information about Zika Virus, visit the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Service website at www.dhhs.nh.gov, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov, or the World Health Organization (WHO) website at www.who.org.