

# Question and Answers:

## Zika virus infection (Zika) and pregnancy

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### What is Zika virus?

Zika virus is a virus that is primarily transmitted by the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. Zika virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Sexual transmission of Zika virus is also possible.

### What are the symptoms of Zika virus infection?

Only 20 percent of patients infected with Zika virus will have symptoms, which may include fever, rash, joint pains and / or eye irritation. Other commonly reported symptoms include myalgia (pain in a muscle or group of muscles) and headache. If symptoms occur, they typically last for several days to a week.

### Is there a vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika?

No. There is no vaccine to prevent infection and no medicine to treat Zika. Treatments are targeted to the symptoms such as acetaminophen for fever or joint pains.

### Why is Zika virus a concern?

The World Health Organization declared Zika virus a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” due to an association of Zika virus infection in pregnant women and serious birth defects of the brain called microcephaly.

### Where is Zika virus transmission occurring?

Currently, outbreaks are occurring in many countries in the Caribbean and Central and South America. For the most up-to-date information on where active transmission is occurring including country specific information, go to [www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](http://www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information).

### What is my risk in Kentucky?

The only cases diagnosed in the United States have been travel-associated, meaning they were acquired while in a region where Zika virus transmission was active. There is currently no risk to people in Kentucky who have not traveled and who do not have a sexual partner who has traveled to areas where Zika virus transmission is active.

### I am pregnant. Should I travel to a country where cases of Zika have been reported?

Until more is known, the CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:

- Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who do travel to one of these areas should talk to their doctor or other health care provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip.
- Women trying to become pregnant or who are thinking about becoming pregnant should consult with their health care provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

Because specific areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing are difficult to determine and likely to change over time, the CDC will update this travel notice as information becomes available. Check CDC’s Zika Travel Information website at [www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](http://www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information) frequently for the most up-to-date recommendations. The currently affected regions include the tropical areas of the Caribbean and Central and South America.

## **I have to travel to an area affected by Zika. How can I protect myself?**

If avoiding travel to these areas is not an option, follow these precautions:

- Remember that daytime is the most dangerous time for the mosquitoes that spread Zika virus, although they can also bite at night.
- Use insect repellent containing one or more of the following active ingredients: DEET, PICARIDIN or IR3535.
- Wear protective clothes, including long-sleeved shirts and long pants. For extra protection, treat clothing with permethrin.
- Use screens on windows and doors. Use air conditioning when available. Keep mosquitoes from laying eggs in and near standing water.

## **Can Zika virus be sexually transmitted?**

Yes, cases of sexually transmitted infections have been reported. The CDC recommends that men who reside in or have traveled to an area of active Zika virus transmission ([www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](http://www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information)) who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms during sex for the duration of the pregnancy.

## **Should a pregnant woman who traveled to an area with Zika virus be tested for the virus?**

If a pregnant woman develops fever, rash, joint pain or red eyes within two weeks after traveling to a country where Zika virus cases have been reported, they should tell their health care provider and testing for Zika virus should be performed.

Testing should also be considered for pregnant women without symptoms 2-12 weeks after they return from a country where Zika virus cases have been reported.

## **Is it safe to get pregnant after traveling to a country with Zika virus?**

If infected, Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for about a week. The virus is not known to cause infections in a baby that is conceived after the virus is cleared from the blood. There is no evidence that the virus will cause birth defects in a baby that is conceived after the virus is cleared from the semen of the father and from the blood of the mother.

## **Where can I go for more information?**

For more information, go to [www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy).