CDC's Response to **Zika**

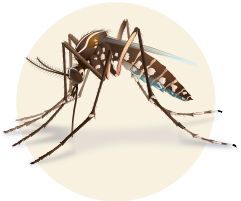
# **ZIKA:** THE BASICS OF THE VIRUS AND HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST IT

## About Zika

Zika virus spreads to people primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito (*Ae. aegypti* and *Ae. albopictus*). Zika can also be passed through sex from a person who has Zika to his or her sex partners and it can be spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus. People can protect themselves from mosquito bites and getting Zika through sex. This fact sheet explains who's most affected and why, symptoms and treatment, and how to protect against Zika.

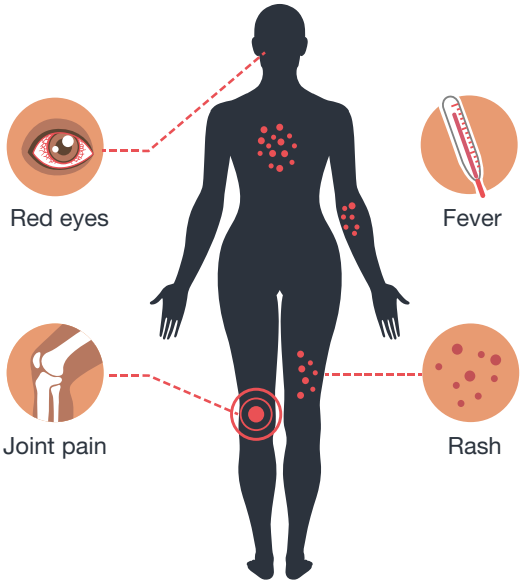
## How Zika Spreads

Protect yourself and family from mosquito bites all day and night, whether you are inside or outside. A mosquito becomes infected when it bites a person already infected with Zika. That mosquito can then spread the virus by biting more people.



**Zika virus can also spread:**

- During sex with a person who has Zika to his or her sex partners.
- From a pregnant woman to her fetus during pregnancy or around the time of birth.
- Through blood transfusion (likely but not confirmed).




## Zika Symptoms

Many people infected with Zika won't have symptoms or will only have mild symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache. Symptoms can last for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika. Once a person has been infected with Zika, they are likely to be protected from future infections.

## Current Zika Outbreak

Zika outbreaks are currently happening in many countries and territories. The mosquitoes that can become infected with and spread Zika live in many parts of the world, including parts of the United States.

Specific areas where Zika virus is spreading are often difficult to determine and are likely to change over time. If traveling, please visit the CDC Travelers' Health website for the most recent travel information.

**www.cdc.gov/zika**

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Why Zika is Risky for Some People

Zika infection during pregnancy can cause fetuses to have a birth defect of the brain called microcephaly. Other problems have been detected among fetuses and infants infected with Zika virus before birth, such as defects of the eye, hearing deficits, and impaired growth. There have also been increased reports of Guillain-Barré syndrome, an uncommon sickness of the nervous system, in areas affected by Zika.

*Microcephaly*

## How to Prevent Zika

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika. The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites. **Here's how:**

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Take steps to control mosquitoes inside and outside your home.
- Treat your clothing and gear with permethrin or buy pre-treated items.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. Always follow the product label instructions.
- When used as directed, these insect repellents are proven safe and effective even for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Do not use insect repellents on babies younger than 2 months old.
- Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol on children younger than 3 years old.
- Mosquito netting can be used to cover babies younger than 2 months old in carriers, strollers, or cribs to protect them from mosquito bites.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors.
- Prevent sexual transmission of Zika by using condoms or not having sex.

## What to do if You Have Zika

**There is no specific medicine to treat Zika. 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.
- If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider before taking additional medication.

**To help prevent others from getting sick, strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the first week of illness.**

**www.cdc.gov/zika**