

## Zika Virus

Zika virus is a mosquito borne virus which has become widespread in South America in particular. It causes a fever but may be transmitted to unborn babies and it is possible that it may be a cause of babies being born with small heads (microcephaly). There may also be nervous system consequences in some people who contract the illness. Both of these problems are currently the subject of a lot of research. Zika virus is spread by Aedes mosquitoes, which are active during the daytime, and causes an illness which looks similar to dengue and chikungunya.

### Public Health England suggests

“ZIKV has a possible association with congenital malformations. Travellers who are pregnant (in any trimester) or planning to become pregnant and who live in, or will travel to areas where any mosquito-borne diseases such as chikungunya, dengue, malaria and ZIKV are known to occur, should consider avoiding travel to an area where an active ZIKV outbreak is being reported. If travel is unavoidable, or they live in areas where an active ZIKV outbreak is being reported, they should take scrupulous measures to avoid mosquito bites during both daytime and night time hours”.

### Prevention

There is no vaccination against Zika virus.

Prevention centres on avoiding mosquito bites. The Aedes mosquito is active all day (unlike the mosquito that transmits malaria).

- Cover up with long sleeved shirts and trousers
- Use insect repellents
- Use mosquito nets and ensure windows have screens
- If you are pregnant consider not travelling to affected areas.

### Symptoms

- About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus become ill (i.e., develop Zika).
- The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache.
- The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.
- Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon.
- Deaths are rare.

## Treatment

- No vaccine or medications are available to prevent or treat Zika infections.
- Treat the symptoms:
  - Get plenty of rest
  - Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
  - Take paracetamol, to relieve fever and pain
  - Aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen and naproxen, should be avoided until dengue can be ruled out to reduce the risk of hemorrhage. If you are taking medicine for another medical condition, talk to your doctor before taking additional medication.
- If you have Zika, avoid mosquito bites for the first week of your illness.
  - During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another mosquito through mosquito bites.
  - An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people.

## Current Risk Areas

Zika virus has been reported in a number of countries over the past year.

As of 17 December 2015, nine countries in the Americas, report confirmed cases in 2015: Brazil Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Honduras and Venezuela.

Since the beginning of 2015, sporadic autochthonous cases have been reported in Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu [4]. New Zealand reported two imported cases from Samoa.

On 3 November 2015, the Cape Verdean Ministry of Health also reported an outbreak

Information about Zika disease is likely to change and more information and updates can be found at

- Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus>
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control  
[http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/zika\\_virus\\_infection/Pages/index.aspx](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/zika_virus_infection/Pages/index.aspx)
- US Centers for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/symptoms/>